









John Boyle O'Reilly

12<sup>th</sup> June 1870.

POEMS.

Mary Boyle O'Reilly

2<sup>nd</sup> Sept. 1898.



ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING'S

POETICAL WORKS.

ELEVENTH EDITION.

IN FIVE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

BOSTON COLLEGE LIBRARY  
CHESTNUT HILL, MASS.

LONDON:

SMITH, ELDER & CO., 15 WATERLOO PLACE.

1877.

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# POEMS.

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## THE ROMAUNT OF THE PAGE.

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### I.

A KNIGHT of gallant deeds  
And a young page at his side,  
From the holy war in Palestine  
Did slow and thoughtful ride,  
As each were a palmer and told for beads  
The dews of the eventide.

### II.

'O young page,' said the knight,  
'A noble page art thou!  
Thou fearest not to steep in blood  
The curls upon thy brow;  
And once in the tent, and twice in the fight,  
Didst ward me a mortal blow.'

## III.

‘O brave knight,’ said the page,  
‘Or ere we hither came,  
We talked in tent, we talked in field,  
Of the bloody battle-game ;  
But here, below this greenwood bough,  
I cannot speak the same.

## IV.

‘Our troop is far behind,  
The woodland calm is new ;  
Our steeds, with slow grass-muffled hoofs,  
Tread deep the shadows through ;  
And, in my mind, some blessing kind  
Is dropping with the dew.

## V.

‘The woodland calm is pure—  
I cannot choose but have  
A thought from these, o’ the beechen-trees,  
Which in our England wave,  
And of the little finches fine  
Which sang there while in Palestine  
The warrior-hilt we drave.

## VI.

‘Methinks, a moment gone,  
I heard my mother pray !  
I heard, sir knight, the prayer for me

Wherein she passed away ;  
And I know the heavens are leaning down  
To hear what I shall say.'

## VII.

The page spake calm and high,  
As of no mean degree ;  
Perhaps he felt in nature's broad  
Full heart, his own was free :  
And the knight looked up to his lifted eye,  
Then answered smilingly—

## VIII.

'Sir page, I pray your grace !  
Certes, I meant not so  
To cross your pastoral mood, sir page,  
With the crook of the battle-bow ;  
But a knight may speak of a lady's face,  
I ween, in any mood or place,  
If the grasses die or grow.

## IX.

And this I meant to say—  
My lady's face shall shine  
As ladies' faces use, to greet  
My page from Palestine ;  
Or, speak she fair or prank she gay,  
She is no lady of mine.

## X.

‘And this I meant to fear—  
Her bower may suit thee ill;  
For, sooth, in that same field and tent,  
Thy *talk* was somewhat still:  
And fitter thy hand for my knightly spear  
Than thy tongue for my lady’s will!’

## XI.

Slowly and thankfully  
The young page bowed his head;  
His large eyes seemed to muse a smile,  
Until he blushed instead,  
And no lady in her bower, pardiè,  
Could blush more sudden red:  
‘Sir Knight,—thy lady’s bower to me  
Is suited well,’ he said.

## XII.

*Beati, beati, mortui!*  
From the convent on the sea,  
One mile off, or scarce so nigh,  
Swells the dirge as clear and high  
As if that, over brake and lea,  
Bodily the wind did carry  
The great altar of St. Mary,  
And the fifty tapers burning o’er it,  
And the lady Abbess dead before it,  
And the chanting nuns whom yesterweek



Her voice did charge and bless,—  
Chanting steady, chanting meek,  
Chanting with a solemn breath,  
Because that they are thinking less  
Upon the dead than upon death.

*Beati, beati, mortui!*

Now the vision in the sound  
Wheeleth on the wind around ;  
Now it sweepeth back, away—  
The uplands will not let it stay  
To dark the western sun :

*Mortui!*—away at last,—

Or ere the page's blush is past !

And the knight heard all, and the page heard none.

XIII.

‘ A boon, thou noble knight,

    If ever I servëd thee !

Though thou art a knight and I am a page,

    Now grant a boon to me ;

And tell me sooth, if dark or bright,

If little loved or loved aright

    Be the face of thy ladye.’

XIV.

Gloomily looked the knight—

    ‘ As a son thou hast servëd me,

And would to none I had granted boon

    Except to only thee !

For haply then I should love aright,  
For then I should know if dark or bright  
Were the face of my ladye.

## XV.

‘Yet it ill suits my knightly tongue  
To grudge that granted boon,  
That heavy price from heart and life  
I paid in silence down ;  
The hand that claimed it, cleared in fine  
My father’s fame : I swear by mine,  
That price was nobly won !

## XVI.

‘Earl Walter was a brave old earl,  
He was my father’s friend ;  
And while I rode the lists at court  
And little guessed the end,  
My noble father in his shroud  
Against a slanderer lying loud,  
He rose up to defend.

## XVII.

‘Oh, calm below the marble grey  
My father’s dust was strown !  
Oh, meek above the marble grey  
His image prayed alone !

The slanderer lied : the wretch was brave—  
For, looking up the minster-nave,  
He saw my father's knightly glaive  
Was changed from steel to stone.

## XVIII.

'Earl Walter's glaive was steel,  
With a brave old hand to wear it,  
And dashed the lie back in the mouth  
Which lied against the godly truth  
And against the knightly merit:  
The slanderer, 'neath the avenger's heel,  
Struck up the dagger in appeal  
From stealthy lie to brutal force—  
And out upon the traitor's corse  
Was yielded the true spirit.

## XIX.

'I would mine hand had fought that fight  
And justified my father!  
I would mine heart had caught that wound  
And slept beside him rather!  
I think it were a better thing  
Than murdered friend and marriage-ring  
Forced on my life together

## XX.

'Wail shook Earl Walter's house;  
His true wife shed no tear;

She lay upon her bed as mute  
As the earl did on his bier :  
Till—‘ Ride, ride fast,’ she said at last,  
‘ And bring the avenged’s son anear !  
Ride fast, ride free, as a dart can flee,  
For white of blee with waiting for me  
Is the corse in the next chambère.’

## XXI.

‘ I came, I knelt beside her bed ;  
Her calm was worse than strife .  
‘ My husband, for thy father dear,  
Gave freely when thou wast not here  
His own and eke my life.  
A boon ! Of that sweet child we make  
An orphan for thy father’s sake,  
Make thou, for ours, a wife.’

## XXII.

‘ I said, ‘ My steed neighs in the court,  
My bark rocks on the brine,  
And the warrior’s vow I am under now  
To free the pilgrim’s shrine ;  
But fetch the ring and fetch the priest  
And call that daughter of thine,  
And rule she wide from my castle on Nyde  
While I am in Palestine.’

## XXIII.

‘In the dark chambère, if the bride was fair,  
Ye wis, I could not see,  
But the steed thrice neighed, and the priest fast prayed,  
And wedded fast were we.  
Her mother smiled upon her bed  
As at its side we knelt to wed,  
And the bride rose from her knee  
And kissed the smile of her mother dead,  
Or ever she kissed me.

## XXIV.

‘My page, my page, what grieves thee so,  
That the tears run down thy face?’—  
‘Alas, alas! mine own sistèr  
Was in thy lady’s case :  
But *she* laid down the silks she wore  
And followed him she wed before,  
Disguised as his true servitor,  
To the very battle-place.’

## XXV.

And wept the page, but laughed the knight,  
A careless laugh laughed he :  
‘Well done it were for thy sistèr,  
But not for my ladye!  
My love, so please you, shall requite  
No woman, whether dark or bright,  
Unwomaned if she be.’

## XXVI.

The page stopped weeping and smiled cold—  
‘Your wisdom may declare  
That womanhood is proved the best  
By golden brooch and glossy vest  
The mincing ladies wear ;  
Yet is it proved, and was of old,  
Anear as well, I dare to hold,  
By truth, or by despair.’

## XXVII.

He smiled no more, he wept no more,  
But passionate he spake—  
‘Oh, womanly she prayed in tent,  
When none beside did wake !  
Oh, womanly she paled in fight,  
For one belovèd’s sake !—  
And her little hand, defiled with blood,  
Her tender tears of womanhood  
Most woman-pure did make !’

## XXVIII.

--‘Well done it were for thy sistèr,  
Thou tellest well her tale !  
But for my lady, she shall pray  
I’ the kirk of Nydesdale.  
Not dread for me but love for me  
Shall make my lady pale ;

No casque shall hide her woman's tear—  
It shall have room to trickle clear  
Behind her woman's veil.'

## XXIX.

—'But what if she mistook thy mind  
And followed thee to strife,  
Then kneeling did entreat thy love  
As Paynims ask for life ?'  
—'I would forgive, and evermore  
Would love her as my servitor,  
But little as my wife.

## XXX.

'Look up—there is a small bright cloud  
Alone amid the skies !  
So high, so pure, and so apart,  
A woman's honour lies.'  
The page looked up—the cloud was sheen—  
A sadder cloud did rush, I ween,  
Betwixt it and his eyes.

## XXXI.

Then dimly dropped his eyes away  
From welkin unto hill—  
Ha ! who rides there ?—the page is 'ware,  
Though the cry at his heart is still :

And the page seeth all and the knight seeth none,  
Though banner and spear do fleck the sun,  
And the Saracens ride at will.

## XXXII.

He speaketh calm, he speaketh low,—  
‘Ride fast, my master, ride,  
Or ere within the broadening dark  
The narrow shadows hide.’  
‘Yea, fast, my page, I will do so,  
And keep thou at my side.’

## XXXIII.

‘Now nay, now nay, ride on thy way,  
Thy faithful page precede.  
For I must loose on saddle-bow  
My battle-casque that galls, I trow,  
The shoulder of my steed;  
And I must pray, as I did vow,  
For one in bitter need.

## XXXIV.

‘Ere night I shall be near to thee,—  
Now ride, my master, ride!  
Ere night, as parted spirits cleave  
To mortals too beloved to leave,  
I shall be at thy side.’  
The knight smiled free at the fantasy,  
And adown the dell did ride.



## XXXV.

Had the knight looked up to the page's face,  
No smile the word had won;  
Had the knight looked up to the page's face,  
I ween he had never gone:  
Had the knight looked back to the page's geste,  
I ween he had turned anon,  
For dread was the woe in the face so young,  
And wild was the silent geste that flung  
Casque, sword to earth, as the boy down-sprung  
And stood—alone, alone.

## XXXVI.

He clenched his hands as if to hold  
His soul's great agony—  
'Have I renounced my womanhood,  
For wifehood unto *thee*,  
And is this the last, last look of thine  
That ever I shall see?

## XXXVII.

'Yet God thee save, and may'st thou have  
A lady to thy mind,  
More woman-proud and half as true  
As one thou leav'st behind!  
And God me take with HIM to dwell—  
For HIM I cannot love too well,  
As I have loved my kind.'

## XXXVIII.

SHE looketh up, in earth's despair,  
The hopeful heavens to seek ;  
That little cloud still floateth there,  
Whereof her loved did speak :  
How bright the little cloud appears !  
Her eyelids fall upon the tears,  
And the tears down either cheek.

## XXXIX.

The tramp of hoof, the flash of steel—  
The Paynims round her coming !  
The sound and sight have made her calm,—  
False page, but truthful woman ;  
She stands amid them all unmoved :  
A heart once broken by the loved  
Is strong to meet the foeman.

## XL.

‘Ho, Christian page ! art keeping sheep,  
From pouring wine-cups resting ?’—  
‘I keep my master's noble name,  
For warring, not for feasting ;  
And if that here Sir Hubert were,  
My master brave, my master dear,  
Ye would not stay the questing.’

## XLI.

‘Where is thy master, scornful page,  
That we may slay or bind him?’—  
‘Now search the lea and search the wood,  
And see if ye can find him!  
Nathless, as hath been often tried,  
Your Paynim heroes faster ride  
Before him than behind him.’

## XLII.

‘Give smoother answers, lying page,  
Or perish in the lying!’—  
‘I trow that if the warrior brand  
Beside my foot, were in my hand,  
’Twere better at replying!’  
They cursed her deep, they smote her low,  
They cleft her golden ringlets through;  
The Loving is the Dying.

## XLIII.

She felt the scimitar gleam down,  
And met it from beneath  
With smile more bright in victory  
Than any sword from sheath,—  
Which flashed across her lip serene,  
Most like the spirit-light between  
The darks of life and death.

## XLIV.

*Ingemisco, ingemisco !*

From the convent on the sea,  
Now it sweepeth solemnly,  
As over wood and over lea  
Bodily the wind did carry  
The great altar of St. Mary,  
And the fifty tapers paling o'er it,  
And the Lady Abbess stark before it,  
And the weary nuns with hearts that faintly  
Beat along their voices saintly—

*Ingemisco, ingemisco !*

Dirge for abbess laid in shroud  
Sweepeth o'er the shroudless dead,  
Page or lady, as we said,  
With the dew upon her head,  
All as sad if not as loud.

*Ingemisco, ingemisco !*

Is ever a lament begun  
By any mourner under sun,  
Which, ere it endeth, suits but *one* ?

## THE LAY OF THE BROWN ROSARY.

### FIRST PART.

#### I.

‘ONORA, Onora,’—her mother is calling,  
She sits at the lattice and hears the dew falling  
Drop after drop from the sycamores laden  
With dew as with blossom, and calls home the maiden,  
‘Night cometh, Onora.’

#### II.

She looks down the garden-walk caverned with trees,  
To the limes at the end where the green arbour is—  
‘Some sweet thought or other may keep where it  
found her,  
While, forgot or unseen in the dreamlight around her,  
Night cometh—Onora!’

#### III.

She looks up the forest whose alleys shoot on  
Like the mute minster-aisles when the anthem is done  
And the choristers sitting with faces aslant  
Feel the silence to consecrate more than the chant—  
‘Onora, Onora!’

## IV.

And forward she looketh across the brown heath—  
‘Onora, art coming?’—what is it she seeth?  
Nought, nought but the grey border-stone that is wist  
To dilate and assume a wild shape in the mist—  
‘My daughter!’ Then over

## V.

The casement she leaneth, and as she doth so  
She is ’ware of her little son playing below :  
‘Now where is Onora?’ He hung down his head  
And spake not, then answering blushed scarlet-red,—  
‘At the tryst with her lover.’

## VI.

But his mother was wroth : in a sternness quoth she,  
‘As thou play’st at the ball art thou playing with me?  
When we know that her lover to battle is gone,  
And the saints know above that she loveth but one  
And will ne’er wed another?’

## VII.

Then the boy wept aloud ; ’twas a fair sight yet sad  
To see the tears run down the sweet blooms he had :  
He stamped with his foot, said—‘The saints know I lied  
Because truth that is wicked is fittest to hide  
Must I utter it, mother?’

## VIII.

In his vehement childhood he hurried within  
And knelt at her feet as in prayer against sin,  
But a child at a prayer never sobbeth as he—  
‘Oh! she sits with the nun of the brown rosary,  
At nights in the ruin—

## IX.

‘The old convent ruin the ivy rots off,  
Where the owl hoots by day and the toad is sun-proof,  
Where no singing-birds build and the trees gaunt and  
grey  
As in stormy sea-coasts appear blasted one way—  
But is *this* the wind’s doing?

## X.

‘A nun in the east wall was buried alive  
Who mocked at the priest when he called her to shrive,  
And shrieked such a curse, as the stone took her breath,  
The old abbess fell backwards and swooned unto death  
With an Ave half-spoken.

## XI.

‘I tried once to pass it, myself and my hound,  
Till, as fearing the lash, down he shivered to ground—  
A brave hound, my mother! a brave hound, ye wot!  
And the wolf thought the same with his fangs at her  
throat  
In the pass of the Brocken

## XII.

‘ At dawn and at eve, mother, who sitteth there  
With the brown rosary never used for a prayer ?  
Stoop low, mother, low ! If we went there to see,  
What an ugly great hole in that east wall must be  
At dawn and at even !

## XIII.

‘ Who meet there, my mother, at dawn and at even ?  
Who meet by that wall, never looking to heaven ?  
O sweetest my sister, what doeth with *thee*  
The ghost of a nun with a brown rosary  
And a face turned from heaven ?

## XIV.

‘ St. Agnes o’erwatcheth my dreams and erewhile  
I have felt through mine eyelids the warmth of her  
smile ;  
But last night, as a sadness like pity came o’er her,  
She whispered—‘ Say *two* prayers at dawn for Onora :  
The Tempted is sinning.’ ’

## XV.

‘ Onora, Onora ! ’ they heard her not coming,  
Not a step on the grass, not a voice through the  
gloaming ;  
But her mother looked up, and she stood on the floor  
Fair and still as the moonlight that came there before,  
And a smile just beginning :



## XVI.

It touches her lips but it dares not arise  
To the height of the mystical sphere of her eyes,  
And the large musing eyes, neither joyous nor sorry,  
Sing on like the angels in separate glory  
Between clouds of amber ;

## XVII.

For the hair droops in clouds amber-coloured till  
stirred  
Into gold by the gesture that comes with a word ;  
While—O soft!—her speaking is so interwound  
Of the dim and the sweet, 'tis a twilight of sound  
And floats through the chamber.

## XVIII.

'Since thou shrivest my brother, fair mother,' said she,  
'I count on thy priesthood for marrying of me ;  
And I know by the hills that the battle is done,  
That my lover rides on, will be here with the sun,  
'Neath the eyes that behold thee.'

## XIX.

Her mother sate silent—too tender, I wis,  
Of the smile her dead father smiled dying to kiss :  
But the boy started up pale with tears, passion-  
wrought—  
O wicked fair sister, the hills utter nought !  
If he cometh, who told thee ?'

## XX.

'I know by the hills,' she resumed calm and clear,  
 'By the beauty upon them, that HE is anear :  
 Did they ever look *so* since he bade me adieu ?  
 Oh, love in the waking, sweet brother, is true  
     As St. Agnes in sleeping !'

## XXI.

Half-ashamed and half-softened the boy did not speak,  
 And the blush met the lashes which fell on his cheek :  
 She bowed down to kiss him : dear saints, did he see  
 Or feel on her bosom the BROWN ROSARY,  
     That he shrank away weeping ?

## SECOND PART.

*A bed. ONORA sleeping. Angels, but not near.*

*First Angel.*

Must we stand so far, and she  
 So very fair ?

*Second Angel.*

As bodies be.

*First Angel.*

And she so mild ?

*Second Angel.*

As spirits when  
 They meeken, not to God, but men.

*First Angel.*

And she so young, that I who bring  
Good dreams for saintly children, might  
Mistake that small soft face to-night,  
And fetch her such a blessèd thing  
That at her waking she would weep  
For childhood lost anew in sleep.  
How hath she sinned ?

*Second Angel.*

In bartering love ;

God's love for man's.

*First Angel.*

We may reprove

The world for this, not only her :  
Let me approach to breathe away  
This dust o' the heart with holy air.

*Second Angel.*

Stand off ! She sleeps, and did not pray.

*First Angel.*

Did none pray for her ?

*Second Angel.*

Ay, a child,—

Who never, praying, wept before :  
While, in a mother undefiled,  
Prayer goeth on in sleep, as true  
And pauseless as the pulses do.

*First Angel.*

Then I approach.

*Second Angel.*

It is not WILLED.

*First Angel.*

One word: is she redeemed?

*Second Angel.*

No more!

The place is filled.

[Angels vanish.

*Evil Spirit in a Nun's garb by the bed.*

Forbear that dream—forbear that dream! too near to  
heaven it leaned.

*Onora in sleep.*

Nay, leave me this—but only this! 'tis but a dream,  
sweet fiend!

*Evil Spirit.*

It is a *thought*.

*Onora in sleep.*

A sleeping thought—most innocent of good:  
It doth the Devil no harm, sweet fiend! it cannot if it  
would.

I say in it no holy hymn, I do no holy work,  
I scarcely hear the sabbath-bell that chimeth from the  
kirk.

*Evil Spirit.*

Forbear that dream—forbear that dream!

*Onora in sleep.*

Nay, let me dream at least.

That far-off bell, it may be took for viol at a feast:  
I only walk among the fields, beneath the autumn-sun,  
With my dead father, hand in hand, as I have often done.

*Evil Spirit.*

Forbear that dream—forbear that dream!

*Onora in sleep.*

Nay, sweet fiend, let me go.

I never more can walk with *him*, oh, never more but so!  
For they have tied my father's feet beneath the kirk-  
yard stone,

Oh, deep and straight, oh, very straight! they move at  
nights alone:

And then he calleth through my dreams, he calleth  
tenderly,

'Come forth my daughter, my beloved, and walk the  
fields with me!'

*Evil Spirit.*

Forbear that dream, or else disprove its pureness by  
a sign.

*Onora in sleep.*

Speak on, thou shalt be satisfied my word shall answer  
thine.

I heard a bird which used to sing when I a child was  
praying,

I see the poppies in the corn I used to sport away in:  
What shall I do—tread down the dew and pull the  
blossoms blowing?

Or clap my wicked hands to fright the finches from the  
rowen?

*Evil Spirit.*

Thou shalt do something harder still. Stand up where  
thou dost stand

Among the fields of Dreamland with thy father hand in  
hand,

And clear and slow repeat the vow, declare its cause  
and kind,

Which not to break, in sleep or wake thou bearest on  
thy mind.

*Onora in sleep.*

I bear a vow of sinful kind, a vow for mournful cause ;  
I vowed it deep, I vowed, it strong, the spirits laughed  
applause :

The spirits trailed along the pines low laughter like  
a breeze,

While, high atween their swinging tops, the stars  
appeared to freeze.

*Evil Spirit.*

More calm and free, speak out to me why such a vow  
was made.

*Onora in sleep.*

Because that God 'dècreed my death and I shrank  
back afraid.

Have patience, O dead father mine ! I did not fear  
to die—

I wish I were a young dead child and had thy com-  
pany !

I wish I lay beside thy feet, a buried three-year  
child,

And wearing only a kiss of thine upon my lips that  
smiled !

The linden-tree that covers thee might so have sha-  
dowed twain,

For death itself I did not fear—'tis love that makes  
the pain :

Love feareth death. I was no child, I was betrothed  
that day ;

I wore a troth-kiss on my lips I could not give away.  
How could I bear to lie content and still beneath a  
stone,  
And feel mine own betrothed go by—alas! no more  
mine own—  
Go leading by in wedding pomp some lovely lady  
brave,  
With cheeks that blushed as red as rose, while mine  
were white in grave?  
How could I bear to sit in heaven, on e'er so high a  
throne,  
And hear him say to her—to *her*! that else he loveth  
none?  
Though e'er so high I sate above, though e'er so low  
he spake,  
As clear as thunder I should hear the new oath he  
might take,  
That hers, forsooth, were heavenly eyes—ah me, while  
very dim  
Some heavenly eyes (indeed of heaven!) would darken  
down to *him*!

*Evil Spirit.*

Who told thee thou wast called to death?

*Onora in sleep.*

I sate all night beside thee:

The grey owl on the ruined wall shut both his eyes  
to hide thee,  
And ever he flapped his heavy wing all brokenly and  
weak,

And the long grass waved against the sky, around his  
gasping beak :

I sate beside thee all the night, while the moonlight  
lay forlorn

Strewn round us like a dead world's shroud in ghastly  
fragments torn :

And through the night, and through the hush, and  
over the flapping wing,

We heard beside the Heavenly Gate the angels mur-  
muring :

We heard them say, ' Put day to day, and count the  
days to seven,

' And God will draw Onora up the golden stairs of  
heaven :

' And yet the Evil ones have leave that purpose to  
defer,

' For if she has no need of HIM, He has no need of her.'

*Evil Spirit.*

Speak out to me, speak bold and free.

*Onora in sleep.*

And then I heard thee say—

' I count upon my rosary brown the hours thou hast to  
stay !

' Yet God permits us Evil ones to put by that decree,

' Since if thou hast no need of HIM, He has no need  
of thee :

' And if thou wilt forgo the sight of angels, verily

Thy true love gazing on thy face shall guess what  
angels be ;



·Nor bride shall pass, save thee' . . . Alas!—my  
father's hand's a-cold,

The meadows seem . . .

*Evil Spirit.*

Forbear the dream, or let the vow be told.

*Onora in sleep.*

I vowed upon thy rosary brown, this string of antique  
beads,

By charnel lichens overgrown, and dank among the  
weeds,

This rosary brown which is thine own,—lost soul of  
buried nun!

Who, lost by vow, wouldst render now all souls alike  
undone,—

I vowed upon thy rosary brown,—and, till such vow  
should break,

A pledge always of living days 'twas hung around my  
neck—

I vowed to thee on rosary, (dead father, look not so!),  
*I would not thank God in my weal, nor seek God in my  
woe.*

*Evil Spirit.*

And canst thou prove . . .

*Onora in sleep.*

O love, my love! I felt him near again!  
I saw his steed on mountain-head, I heard it on the  
plain!

Was this no weal for me to feel? Is greater weal  
than this?

Yet when he came, I wept his name—and the angels  
heard but *his*.

*Evil Spirit.*

Well done, well done!

*Onora in sleep.*

Ah me, the sun! the dreamlight 'gins to pine,—  
Ah me, how dread can look the Dead! Aroint thee,  
father mine!

She starteth from slumber, she sitteth upright,  
And her breath comes in sobs, while she stares through  
the night;

There is nought; the great willow, her lattice before,  
Large-drawn in the moon, lieth calm on the floor:  
But her hands tremble fast as their pulses and, free  
From the death-clasp, close over—the BROWN ROSARY.

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### THIRD PART.

#### I.

'Tis a morn for a bridal; the merry bride-bell  
Rings clear through the green-wood that skirts the  
chappelle,  
And the priest at the altar awaiteth the bride,  
And the sacristans slyly are jesting aside  
At the work shall be doing;

## II.

While down through the wood rides that fair company,  
The youths with the courtship, the maids with the glee,  
Till the chapel-cross opens to sight, and at once  
All the maids sigh demurely and think for the nonce,  
‘And so endeth a wooing!’

## III.

And the bride and the bridegroom are leading the way,  
With his hand on her rein, and a word yet to say ;  
Her dropt eyelids suggest the soft answers beneath,  
And the little quick smiles come and go with her breath  
When she sigheth or speaketh.

## IV.

And the tender bride-mother breaks off unaware  
From an Ave, to think that her daughter is fair,  
Till in nearing the chapel and glancing before,  
She seeth her little son stand at the door :  
Is it play that he seeketh ?

## V.

Is it play, when his eyes wander innocent-wild  
And sublimed with a sadness unfitting a child ?  
He trembles not, weeps not ; the passion is done,  
And calmly he kneels in their midst, with the sun  
On his head like a glory.

## VI.

‘O fair-featured maids, ye are many!’ he cried,  
‘But in fairness and vileness who matcheth the bride?  
O brave-hearted youths, ye are many! but whom  
For the courage and woe can ye match with the groom  
As ye see them before ye?’

## VII.

Out spake the bride’s mother, ‘The vileness is thine  
If thou shame thine own sister, a bride at the shrine!’  
Out spake the bride’s lover, ‘The vileness be mine  
If he shame mine own wife at the hearth or the shrine  
And the charge be unprovèd.’

## VIII.

‘Bring the charge, prove the charge, brother! speak  
it aloud:  
Let thy father and hers hear it deep in his shroud!’  
—‘O father, thou seest, for dead eyes can see,  
How she wears on her bosom a BROWN ROSARY,  
O my father beloved!’

## IX.

Then outlaughed the bridegroom, and outlaughed  
withal  
Both maidens and youths by the old chapel-wall:  
‘So she weareth no love-gift, kind brother,’ quoth he  
‘She may wear an she listeth a brown rosary,  
Like a pure-hearted lady.’

## X.

Then swept through the chapel the long bridal train;  
Though he spake to the bride she replied not again :  
On, as one in a dream, pale and stately she went  
Where the altar-lights burn o'er the great sacrament,  
Faint with daylight, but steady.

## XI.

But her brother had passed in between them and her,  
And calmly knelt down on the high altar-stair—  
Of an infantine aspect so stern to the view  
That the priest could not smile on the child's eyes of  
blue  
As he would for another.

## XII.

He knelt like a child marble-sculptured and white  
That seems kneeling to pray on the tomb of a knight,  
With a look taken up to each iris of stone  
From the greatness and death where he kneeleth, but  
none  
From the face of a mother.

## XIII.

'In your chapel, O priest, ye have wedded and shriven  
Fair wives for the hearth, and fair sinners for heaven;  
But this fairest my sister, ye think now to wed,  
Bid her kneel where she standeth, and shrive her  
instead :  
O shrive her and wed not !'

## XIV.

In tears, the bride's mother,—‘Sir priest, unto thee  
Would he lie, as he lied to this fair company.’  
In wrath, the bride's lover,—‘The lie shall be clear!  
Speak it out, boy! the saints in their niches shall hear:  
Be the charge proved or said not!’

## XV.

Then serene in his childhood he lifted his face,  
And his voice sounded holy and fit for the place,—  
‘Look down from your niches, ye still saints, and see  
How she wears on her bosom a BROWN ROSARY!  
Is it used for the praying?’

## XVI

The youths looked aside—to laugh there were a sin—  
And the maidens' lips trembled from smiles shut  
within:  
Quoth the priest, ‘Thou art wild, pretty boy! Blessed  
she  
Who prefers at her bridal a brown rosary  
To a worldly arraying.’

## XVII.

The bridegroom spake low and led onward the bride  
And before the high altar they stood side by side:  
The rite-book is opened, the rite is begun,  
They have knelt down together to rise up as one.  
Who laughed by the altar?

## XVIII.

The maidens looked forward, the youths looked around,  
The bridegroom's eye flashed from his prayer at the  
sound ;

And each saw the bride, as if no bride she were,  
Gazing cold at the priest without gesture of prayer,  
As he read from the psalter.

## XIX.

The priest never knew that she did so, but still  
He felt a power on him too strong for his will,  
And whenever the Great Name was there to be read,  
His voice sank to silence—THAT could not be said,  
Or the air could not hold it.

## XX.

'I have sinnëd,' quoth he, 'I have sinnëd, I wot'—  
And the tears ran adown his old cheeks at the thought:  
They dropped fast on the book, but he read on the  
same,  
And aye was the silence where should be the NAME,—  
As the choristers told it.

## XXI.

The rite-book is closed, and the rite being done  
They who knelt down together, arise up as one :  
Fair riseth the bride—Oh, a fair bride is she,  
But, for all (think the maidens) that brown rosary,  
No saint at her praying !

## XXII.

What aileth the bridegroom? He glares blank and  
wide;

Then suddenly turning he kisseth the bride;  
His lips stung her with cold; she glanced upwardly  
mute:

'Mine own wife,' he said, and fell stark at her foot  
In the word he was saying.

## XXIII.

They have lifted him up, but his head sinks away,  
And his face showeth bleak in the sunshine and grey.  
Leave him now where he lieth—for oh, never more  
Will he kneel at an altar or stand on a floor!

Let his bride gaze upon him.

## XXIV.

Long and still was her gaze while they chafed him  
there

And breathed in the mouth whose last life had kissed  
her,

But when they stood up—only *they!* with a start  
The shriek from her soul struck her pale lips apart:

She has lived, and forgone him!

## XXV.

And low on his body she droppeth adown—

'Didst call me thine own wife, beloved—thine own?

Then take thine own with thee! thy coldness is warm  
To the world's cold without thee! Come, keep me  
from harm

In a calm of thy teaching.'



## XXVI.

She looked in his face earnest-long, as in sooth  
There were hope of an answer, and then kissed his  
mouth

And with head on his bosom, wept, wept bitterly,—  
'Now, O God, take pity—take pity on me!  
God, hear my beseeching!'

## XXVII.

She was 'ware of a shadow that crossed where she lay,  
She was 'ware of a presence that withered the day:  
Wild she sprang to her feet,—'I surrender to *thee*  
The broken vow's pledge, the accursed rosary,—  
I am ready for dying!'

## XXVIII.

She dashed it in scorn to the marble-paved ground  
Where it fell mute as snow, and a weird music-sound  
Crept up, like a chill, up the aisles long and dim,—  
As the fiends tried to mock at the choristers' hymn  
And moaned in the trying.

## FOURTH PART.

ONORA looketh listlessly adown the garden walk :  
‘I am weary, O my mother, of thy tender talk.  
I am weary of the trees a-waving to and fro,  
Of the steadfast skies above, the running brooks  
below.

All things are the same but I,—only I am dreary,  
And, mother, of my dreariness behold me very  
weary.

‘Mother, brother, pull the flowers I planted in the  
spring  
And smiled to think I should smile more upon their  
gathering :

The bees will find out other flowers—oh, pull them,  
dearest mine,  
And carry them and carry me before St. Agnes’  
shrine.’

—Whereat they pulled the summer flowers she  
planted in the spring,  
And her and them all mournfully to Agnes’ shrine  
did bring.

She looked up to the pictured saint and gently shook  
her head—

‘The picture is too calm for *me*—too calm for *me*,’ she  
said:

‘The little flowers we brought with us, before it we  
may lay,

For those are used to look at heaven,—but *I* must  
turn away,

Because no sinner under sun can dare or bear to  
gaze

On God’s or angel’s holiness, except in Jesu’s face.’

She spoke with passion after pause—‘And were it  
wisely done

If we who cannot gaze above, should walk the earth  
alone?

If we whose virtue is so weak should have a will so  
strong,

And stand blind on the rocks to choose the right path  
from the wrong?

To choose perhaps a love-lit hearth, instead of love  
and heaven,—

A single rose, for a rose-tree which beareth seven  
times seven?

A rose that droppeth from the hand, that fadeth in  
the breast,—

Until, in grieving for the worst, we learn what is the  
best!’

Then breaking into tears,—‘Dear God,’ she cried,  
‘and must we see  
All blissful things depart from us or ere we go to THEE?  
We cannot guess thee in the wood or hear thee in the  
wind?  
Our cedars must fall round us ere we see the light  
behind?  
Ay sooth, we feel too strong, in weal, to need thee on  
that road,  
But woe being come, the soul is dumb that crieth not  
on ‘God.’’

Her mother could not speak for tears; she ever musèd  
thus,  
‘*The bees will find out other flowers,—but what is left  
for us?*’  
But her young brother stayed his sobs and knelt beside  
her knee,  
—‘Thou sweetest sister in the world, hast never a  
word for me?’  
She passed her hand across his face, she pressed it on  
his cheek,  
So tenderly, so tenderly—she needed not to speak.

The wreath which lay on shrine that day, at vespers  
bloomed no more.  
The woman fair who placed it there, had died an hour  
before.

Both perished mute for lack of root, earth's nourishment to reach.

O reader, breathe (the ballad saith) some sweetness out of each!

## A ROMANCE OF THE GANGES.



### I.

SEVEN maidens 'neath the midnight  
Stand near the river-sea  
Whose water sweepeth white around  
The shadow of the tree ;  
The moon and earth are face to face,  
And earth is slumbering deep ;  
The wave-voice seems the voice of dreams  
That wander through her sleep :  
The river floweth on.

### II.

What bring they 'neath the midnight,  
Beside the river-sea ?  
They bring the human heart wherein  
No nightly calm can be,—  
That droppeth never with the wind,  
Nor drieth with the dew :  
Oh, calm it God ! thy calm is broad  
To cover spirits too.  
The river floweth on.

## III.

The maidens lean them over  
The waters, side by side,  
And shun each other's deepening eyes,  
And gaze adown the tide ;  
For each within a little boat  
A little lamp hath put,  
And heaped for freight some lily's weight  
Or scarlet rose half shut.  
The river floweth on.

## IV.

Of shell of cocoa carven  
Each little boat is made ;  
Each carries a lamp, and carries a flower,  
And carries a hope unsaid ;  
And when the boat hath carried the lamp  
Unquenched till out of sight,  
The maiden is sure that love will endure ;  
But love will fail with light.  
The river floweth on.

## V.

Why, all the stars are ready  
To symbolize the soul,  
The stars untroubled by the wind,  
Unwearied as they roll ;  
And yet the soul by instinct sad

Reverts to symbols low—  
To that small flame, whose very name  
Breathed o'er it, shakes it so!  
The river floweth on.

## VI.

Six boats are on the river,  
Seven maidens on the shore,  
While still above them steadfastly  
The stars shine evermore.  
Go, little boats, go soft and safe,  
And guard the symbol spark!  
The boats aright go safe and bright  
Across the waters dark.  
The river floweth on.

## VII.

The maiden Luti watcheth  
Where onwardly they float:  
That look in her dilating eyes  
Might seem to drive her boat:  
Her eyes still mark the constant fire,  
And kindling unawares  
That hopeful while, she lets a smile  
Creep silent through her prayers.  
The river floweth on.

## VIII.

The smile—where hath it wandered?  
She riseth from her knee,



She holds her dark, wet locks away—

There is no light to see!

She cries a quick and bitter cry—

‘Nuleeni, launch me thine!

We must have light abroad to-night,

For all the wreck of mine.’

The river floweth on.

IX.

‘I do remember watching

Beside this river-bed

When on my childish knee was leaned

My dying father’s head;

I turned mine own to keep the tears

From falling on his face:

What doth it prove when Death and Love

Choose out the self-same place?’

The river floweth on.

X.

‘They say the dead are joyful

The death-change here receiving:

Who say—ah, me! who dare to say

Where joy comes to the living?

Thy boat, Nuleeni! look not sad—

Light up the waters rather!

I weep no faithless lover where

I wept a loving father.’

The river floweth on.

## XI.

‘ My heart foretold his falsehood  
Ere my little boat grew dim ;  
And though I closed mine eyes to dream  
That one last dream of *him*,  
They shall not now be wet to see  
The shining vision go :  
From earth’s cold love I look above  
To the holy house of snow.’\*  
The river floweth on.

## XII.

‘ Come thou—thou never knewest  
A grief, that thou shouldst fear one !  
Thou wearest still the happy look  
That shines beneath a dear one :  
Thy humming-bird is in the sun,†  
‘Thy cuckoo in the grove,  
And all the three broad worlds, for thee  
Are full of wandering love.’  
The river floweth on.

## XIII.

‘ Why, maiden, dost thou loiter ?  
What secret wouldst thou cover ?

\* The Hindoo heaven is localized on the summit of Mount Meru—one of the mountains of Himalaya or Himmaleh, which signifies, I believe, in Sanscrit, the abode of snow, winter, or coldness.

† Himadeva, the Indian god of love, is imagined to wander through the three worlds, accompanied by the humming-bird, cuckoo, and gentle breezes.

That peepul cannot hide thy boat,  
And I can guess thy lover ;  
I heard thee sob his name in sleep,  
It was a name I knew :  
Come, little maid, be not afraid,  
But let us prove him true !'  
The river floweth on.

## xiv.

The little maiden cometh,  
She cometh shy and slow ;  
I ween she seeth through her lids,  
They drop adown so low :  
Her tresses meet her small bare feet,  
She stands and speaketh nought,  
Yet blusheth red as if she said  
The name she only thought.  
The river floweth on.

## xv.

She knelt beside the water,  
She lighted up the flame,  
And o'er her youthful forehead's calm  
The fitful radiance came :—  
'Go, little boat, go soft and safe,  
And guard the symbol spark !'  
Soft, safe doth float the little boat  
Across the waters dark.  
The river floweth on.

## XVI.

Glad tears her eyes have blinded,  
The light they cannot reach ;  
She turneth with that sudden smile  
She learnt before her speech—  
' I do not hear his voice, the tears  
Have dimmed my light away,  
But the symbol light will last to-night,  
The love will last for aye !'  
The river floweth on.

## XVII.

Then Luti spake behind her,  
Out-spake she bitterly—  
' By the symbol light that lasts to-night,  
Wilt vow a vow to me ?'  
Nuleeni gazeth up her face,  
Soft answer maketh she—  
' By loves that last when lights are past,  
I vow that vow to thee !'  
The river floweth on.

## XVIII.

An earthly look had Luti  
Though her voice was deep as prayer—  
' The rice is gathered from the plains  
To cast upon thine hair :\*

\* The casting of rice upon the head, and the fixing of the band or tali about the neck, are parts of the Hindoo marriage ceremonial.

But when *he* comes his marriage-band  
Around thy neck to throw,  
Thy bride-smile raise to meet his gaze,  
And whisper,—*There is one betrays,*  
*While Luti suffers woe.*  
The river floweth on.

## XIX.

‘And when in seasons after,  
Thy little bright-faced son  
Shall lean against thy knee and ask  
What deeds his sire hath done,—  
Press deeper down thy mother-smile  
His glossy curls among,  
View deep his pretty childish eyes,  
And whisper,—*There is none denies,*  
*While Luti speaks of wrong.*  
The river floweth on.

## XX.

Nuleeni looked in wonder,  
Yet softly answered she—  
‘By loves that last when lights are past,  
I vowed that vow to thee:  
But why glads it thee that a bride-day be  
By a word of *woe* defiled?  
That a word of *wrong* take the cradle-song  
From the ear of a sinless child?’  
‘Why?’ Luti said, and her laugh was dread,

And her eyes dilated wild—  
 ‘That the fair new love may her bridegroom prove,  
 And the father shame the child!’  
 The river floweth on.

## XXI.

‘Thou flowest still, O river,  
 Thou flowest ’neath the moon;  
 Thy lily hath not changed a leaf,\*  
 Thy charmèd lute a tune:  
*He* mixed his voice with thine and *his*  
 Was all I heard around;  
 But now, beside his chosen bride,  
 I hear the river’s sound.’  
 The river floweth on.

## XXII.

‘I gaze upon her beauty  
 Through the tresses that enwreath it;  
 The light above thy wave, is hers—  
 My rest, alone beneath it:  
 Oh, give me back the dying look  
 My father gave thy water!  
 Give back—and let a little love  
 O’erwatch his weary daughter!’  
 The river floweth on.

\* The Ganges is represented as a white woman, with a water-lily in her right hand, and in her left a lute.

## XXIII.

‘Give back!’ she hath departed—

The word is wandering with her;  
And the stricken maidens hear afar

The step and cry together.

Frail symbols? None are frail enow

For mortal joys to borrow!—

While bright doth float Nuleeni’s boat,

She weepeth dark with sorrow.

The river floweth on.

## RHYME OF THE DUCHESS MAY.

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### I.

To the belfry, one by one, went the ringers from the  
sun,

*Toll slowly.*

And the oldest ringer said, 'Ours is music for the  
dead

When the rebecks are all done.'

### II.

Six abeles i' the churchyard grow on the northside in  
a row,

*Toll slowly.*

And the shadows of their tops rock across the little  
slopes

Of the grassy graves below.

### III.

On the south side and the west a small river runs in  
haste,

*Toll slowly.*



And, between the river flowing and the fair green trees  
 a-growing,  
 Do the dead lie at their rest.

IV.

On the east I sate that day, up against a willow  
 grey :

*Toll slowly.*

Through the rain of willow-branches I could see the  
 low hill-ranges  
 And the river on its way.

V.

There I sate beneath the tree, and the bell tolled  
 solemnly,

*Toll slowly.*

While the trees' and river's voices flowed between the  
 solemn noises,—  
 Yet death seemed more loud to me.

VI.

There I read this ancient rhyme while the bell did all  
 the time

*Toll slowly.*

And the solemn knell fell in with the tale of life  
 and sin,  
 Like a rhythmic fate sublime.

## THE RHYME.

## I.

Broad the forests stood (I read) on the hills of Linteged,  
*Toll slowly.*

And three hundred years had stood mute adown each  
hoary wood,  
Like a full heart having prayed.

## II.

And the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang  
west,  
*Toll slowly.*

And but little thought was theirs of the silent antique  
years,  
In the building of their nest.

## III.

Down the sun dropt large and red on the towers of  
Linteged,—  
*Toll slowly.*

Lance and spear upon the height, bristling strange in  
fiery light,  
While the castle stood in shade.

## IV.

There the castle stood up black with the red sun at  
its back,  
*Toll slowly.*

Like a sullen smouldering pyre with a top that flickers  
fire

When the wind is on its track.

v.

And five hundred archers tall did besiege the castle  
wall,

*Toll slowly.*

And the castle, seethed in blood, fourteen days and  
nights had stood

And to-night was near its fall,

vi.

Yet thereunto, blind to doom, three months since, a  
bride did come,

*Toll slowly.*

One who proudly trod the floors and softly whispered  
in the doors,

‘May good angels bless our home.’

vii.

Oh, a bride of queenly eyes, with a front of con-  
stancies,

*Toll slowly.*

Oh, a bride of cordial mouth where the untired smile  
of youth

Did light outward its own sighs!

## VIII.

'Twas a Duke's fair orphan-girl, and her uncle's ward—  
the Earl,

*Toll slowly.*

Who betrothed her twelve years old, for the sake of  
dowry gold,  
To his son Lord Leigh the churl.

## IX.

But what time she had made good all her years of  
womanhood,

*Toll slowly.*

Unto both these Lords of Leigh spake she out right  
sovrانly,  
'My will runneth as my blood.

## X.

'And while this same blood makes red this same right  
hand's veins,' she said,

*Toll slowly.*

''Tis my will as lady free, not to wed a lord of Leigh,  
But Sir Guy of Linteged.'

## XI.

The old Earl he smilēd smooth, then he sighed for  
wilful youth,—

*Toll slowly.*

'Good my niece, that hand withal looketh somewhat  
soft and small  
For so large a will, in sooth.'

XII.

She too smiled by that same sign, but her smile was  
cold and fine,—

*Toll slowly.*

‘ Little hand clasps muckle gold, or it were not worth  
the hold

Of thy son, good uncle mine!’

XIII.

Then the young lord jerked his breath, and sware  
thickly in his teeth,

*Toll slowly.*

‘ He would wed his own betrothed, an she loved him  
an she loathed,

Let the life come or the death.’

XIV.

Up she rose with scornful eyes, as her father’s child  
might rise,—

*Toll slowly.*

‘ Thy hound’s blood, my lord of Leigh, stains thy  
knightly heel,’ quoth she,

‘ And he moans not where he lies :

XV.

‘ But a woman’s will dies hard, in the hall or on the  
sward ’—

*Toll slowly.*

'By that grave, my lords, which made me orphaned  
girl and dowered lady,  
I deny you wife and ward!'

## XVI.

Unto each she bowed her head and swept past with  
lofty tread.

*Toll slowly.*

Ere the midnight-bell had ceased, in the chapel had  
the priest

Blessed her, bride of Linteged.

## XVII.

Fast and fain the bridal train along the night-storm  
rode amain:

*Toll slowly.*

Hard the steeds of lord and serf struck their hoofs out  
on the turf,

In the pauses of the rain.

## XVIII.

Fast and fain the kinsmen's train along the storm  
pursued amain,

*Toll slowly.*

Steed on steed-track, dashing off,—thickening, doubling,  
hoof on hoof,

In the pauses of the rain.

XIX.

And the bridegroom led the flight on his red-roan  
steed of might,

*Toll slowly.*

And the bride lay on his arm, still, as if she feared no harm,  
Smiling out into the night.

XX.

'Dost thou fear?' he said at last: 'Nay,' she answered  
him in haste,—

*Toll slowly.*

'Not such death as we could find—only life with one  
behind.

Ride on fast as fear, ride fast!'

XXI.

Up the mountain wheeled the steed—girth to ground,  
and fetlocks spread,—

*Toll slowly.*

Headlong bounds, and rocking flanks,—down he stag-  
gered, down the banks,

To the towers of Linteged.

XXII.

High and low the serfs looked out, red the flambeaus  
tossed about,

*Toll slowly.*

In the courtyard rose the cry, 'Live the Duchess and  
Sir Guy!'

But she never heard them shout.

## XXIII.

On the steed she dropped her check, kissed his mane  
and kissed his neck,—

*Toll slowly.*

‘I had happier died by thee than lived on, a Lady Leigh,’  
Were the first words she did speak.

## XXIV.

But a three months’ joyaunce lay ’twixt that moment  
and to-day,

*Toll slowly.*

When five hundred archers tall stand beside the castle  
wall

To recapture Duchess May

## XXV.

And the castle standeth black with the red sun at its  
back,

*Toll slowly.*

And a fortnight’s siege is done, and, except the  
duchess, none

Can misdoubt the coming wrack.

## XXVI.

Then the captain, young Lord Leigh, with his eyes so  
grey of blee,

*Toll slowly.*

And thin lips that scarcely sheath the cold white  
gnashing of his teeth,

Gnashed in smiling, absently,



XXVII.

Cried aloud, 'So goes the day, bridegroom fair of  
Duchess May !'

*Toll slowly.*

'Look thy last upon that sun ! if thou seest to-mor-  
row's one

'Twill be through a foot of clay.

XXVIII.

'Ha, fair bride ! dost hear no sound save that moan-  
ing of the hound ?'

*Toll slowly.*

'Thou and I have parted troth, yet I keep my ven-  
geance-oath,

And the other may come round.

XXIX.

'Ha ! thy will is brave to dare, and thy new love past  
compare,'—

*Toll slowly.*

'Yet thine old love's faulchion brave is as strong a  
thing to have,

As the will of lady fair.

XXX.

'Peck on blindly, netted dove ! If a wife's name thee  
behave,"

*Toll slowly.*

'Thou shalt wear the same to-morrow, ere the grave  
has hid the sorrow

Of thy last ill-mated love.

## XXXI.

‘ O’er his fixed and silent mouth, thou and I will call  
back troth ;’

*Toll slowly.*

‘ He shall altar be and priest,—and he will not cry at  
least

“ I forbid you, I am loth !”

## XXXII.

‘ I will wring thy fingers pale in the gauntlet of my  
mail,’

*Toll slowly.*

“ Little hand and muckle gold ” close shall lie within  
my hold,

As the sword did, to prevail.’

## XXXIII.

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang  
west,

*Toll slowly.*

Oh, and laughed the Duchess May, and her soul did  
put away

All his boasting, for a jest.

## XXXIV.

In her chamber did she sit, laughing low to think of it,—

*Toll slowly.*

‘ Tower is strong and will is free : thou canst boast,  
my lord of Leigh,

But thou boastest little-wit.’

XXXV.

In her tire-glass gazèd she, and she blushed right  
womanly:

*Toll slowly.*

She blushed half from her disdain, half her beauty  
was so plain,

—‘ Oath for oath, my lord of Leigh!’

XXXVI.

Straight she called her maidens in—‘ Since ye gave me  
blame herein,’

*Toll slowly.*

‘ That a bridal such as mine should lack gauds to make  
it fine,

Come and shrive me from that sin.

XXXVII.

‘ It is three months gone to-day since I gave mine  
hand away :’

*Toll slowly.*

‘ Bring the gold and bring the gem, we will keep bride-  
state in them,

While we keep the foe at bay.

XXXVIII.

‘ On your arms I loose mine hair; comb it smooth  
and crown it fair :’

*Toll slowly.*

‘I would look in purple pall from this lattice down  
the wall,  
And throw scorn to one that’s there!’

## XXXIX.

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang  
west:

*Toll slowly.*

On the tower the castle’s lord leant in silence on his  
sword,  
With an anguish in his breast.

## XL.

With a spirit-laden weight did he lean down passion-  
ate:

*Toll slowly.*

They have almost sapped the wall,—they will enter  
therewithal  
With no knocking at the gate.

## XLI.

Then the sword he leant upon, shivered, snapped  
upon the stone,—

*Toll slowly.*

‘Sword,’ he thought, with inward laugh, ‘ill thou  
servest for a staff  
When thy nobler use is done!’

XLII.

‘Sword, thy nobler use is done! tower is lost, and  
shame begun!’—

*Toll slowly.*

‘If we met them in the breach, hilt to hilt or speech  
to speech,

We should die there, each for one.

XLIII.

‘If we met them at the wall, we should singly, vainly  
fall,’

*Toll slowly.*

‘But if *I* die here alone,—then I die who am but one,  
And die nobly for them all.

XLIV.

‘Five true friends lie for my sake in the moat and in  
the brake,’

*Toll slowly.*

‘Thirteen warriors lie at rest with a black wound in  
the breast,

And not one of these will wake.

XLV.

‘So, no more of this shall be! heart-blood weighs too  
heavily,’—

*Toll slowly.*

‘And I could not sleep in grave, with the faithful and  
the brave

Heaped around and over me.

## XLVI.

Since young Clare a mother hath, and young Ralph  
a plighted faith,'

*Toll slowly.*

' Since my pale young sister's cheeks blush like rose  
when Ronald speaks,

Albeit never a word she saith—

## XLVII.

' These shall never die for me : life-blood falls too  
heavily :'

*Toll slowly.*

' And if *I* die here apart, o'er my dead and silent  
heart

They shall pass out safe and free.

## XLVIII.

' When the foe hath heard it said—' Death holds Guy '  
of Linteged,''

*Toll slowly.*

' That new corse new peace shall bring, and a blessèd,  
blessèd thing

Shall the stone be at its head.

## XLIX.

' Then my friends shall pass out free, and shall bear  
my memory,'

*Toll slowly.*

‘Then my foes shall sleek their pride, soothing fair  
my widowed bride  
Whose sole sin was love of me:

L.

‘With their words all smooth and sweet, they will  
front her and entreat,’  
*Toll slowly.*  
‘And their purple pall will spread underneath her  
fainting head  
While her tears drop over it.

LI.

‘She will weep her woman’s tears, she will pray her  
woman’s prayers,’  
*Toll slowly.*  
‘But her heart is young in pain, and her hopes will  
spring again  
By the suntime of her years.

LII.

‘Ah, sweet May! ah, sweetest grief!—once I vowed  
thee my belief,’  
*Toll slowly.*  
‘That thy name expressed thy sweetness,—May of  
poets, in completeness!’  
Now my May-day seemeth brief.’

## LIII.

All these silent thoughts did swim o'er his eyes grown  
strange and dim,

*Toll slowly.*

Till his true men in the place, wished they stood there  
face to face

With the foe instead of him.

## LIV.

'One last oath, my friends that wear faithful hearts to  
do and dare!'

*Toll slowly.*

'Tower must fall and bride be lost—swear me service  
worth the cost!'

Bold they stood around to swear.

## LV.

'Each man clasp my hand and swear by the deed we  
failed in there,'

*Toll slowly.*

'Not for vengeance, not for right, will ye strike one  
blow to-night!'

Pale they stood around to swear.

## LVI.

'One last boon, young Ralph and Clare! faithful hearts  
to do and dare!'

*Toll slowly.*



‘Bring that steed up from his stall, which she kissed  
before you all,  
Guide him up the turret-stair.

LVII.

‘Ye shall harness him aright, and lead upward to this  
height;’

*Toll slowly.*

‘Once in love and twice in war, hath he borne me  
strong and far :  
He shall bear me far to-night.’

LVIII.

Then his men looked to and fro, when they heard him  
speaking so,

*Toll slowly.*

‘‘Las! the noble heart,’ they thought, ‘he in sooth is  
grief-distraught :  
Would we stood here with the foe!’

LIX.

But a fire flashed from his eye, ’twixt their thought  
and their reply,—

*Toll slowly.*

‘Have ye so much time to waste? We who ride here,  
must ride fast  
As we wish our foes to fly.’

## LX.

They have fetched the steed with care, in the harness  
he did wear,

*Toll slowly.*

Past the court and through the doors, across the  
rushes of the floors,

But they goad him up the stair.

## LXI.

Then from out her bower chambère, did the Duchess  
May repair:

*Toll slowly.*

‘Tell me now what is your need,’ said the lady, ‘of  
this steed,

That ye goad him up the stair?’

## LXII.

Calm she stood; unbodkined through, fell her dark hair  
to her shoe;

*Toll slowly.*

And the smile upon her face, ere she left the tiring-glass,  
Had not time enough to go.

## LXIII.

‘Get thee back, sweet Duchess May! hope is gone like  
yesterday,’

*Toll slowly.*

‘One half-hour completes the breach; and thy lord  
grows wild of speech—

Get thee in, sweet lady, and pray!

LXIV.

‘In the east tower, high’st of all, loud he cries for steed  
from stall :’

*Toll slowly.*

‘He would ride as far,’ quoth he, ‘as for love and  
victory,  
Though he rides the castle-wall.’

LXV.

‘And we fetch the steed from stall, up where never a  
hoof did fall’—

*Toll slowly.*

‘Wifely prayer meets deathly need : may the sweet  
Heavens hear thee plead  
If he rides the castle-wall !’

LXVI.

Low she dropt her head, and lower, till her hair coiled  
on the floor,

*Toll slowly.*

And tear after tear you heard fall distinct as any word  
Which you might be listening for.

LXVII.

‘Get thee in, thou soft ladye ! here is never a place  
for thee !’

*Toll slowly.*

‘Braid thine hair and clasp thy gown, that thy beauty  
in its moan  
May find grace with Leigh of Leigh.’

## LXVIII.

She stood up in bitter case, with a pale yet steady face  
*Toll slowly.*

Like a statue thunderstruck, which, though quivering,  
seems to look  
Right against the thunder-place.

## LXIX.

And her foot trod in, with pride, her own tears i' the  
stone beside,—  
*Toll slowly.*

'Go to, faithful friends, go to! judge no more what  
ladies do,  
No, nor how their lords may ride!'

## LXX.

Then the good steed's rein she took, and his neck did  
kiss and stroke:  
*Toll slowly.*

Soft he neighed to answer her, and then followed up  
the stair  
For the love of her sweet look:

## LXXI.

Oh, and steeply, steeply wound up the narrow stair  
around,  
*Toll slowly.*

Oh, and closely, closely speeding, step by step beside  
her treading  
Did he follow, meek as hound.

LXXII.

On the east tower, high'st of all,—there, where never  
a hoof did fall,—

*Toll slowly.*

Out they swept, a vision steady, noble steed and  
lovely lady,

Calm as if in bower or stall.

LXXIII.

Down she knelt at her lord's knee, and she looked up  
silently,

*Toll slowly.*

And he kissed her twice and thrice, for that look within  
her eyes

Which he could not bear to see.

LXXIV.

Quoth he, 'Get thee from this strife, and the sweet  
saints bless thy life!'

*Toll slowly.*

'In this hour I stand in need of my noble red-roan steed,  
But no more of my noble wife.'

LXXV.

Quoth she, 'Meekly have I done all thy biddings under  
sun;'

*Toll slowly.*

'But by all my womanhood, which is proved so, true  
and good,

I will never do this one.

## LXXVI.

‘Now by womanhood’s degree and by wifehood’s  
verity,’

*Toll slowly.*

‘In this hour if thou hast need of thy noble red-roan  
steed,

Thou hast also need of *me*.

## LXXVII.

‘By this golden ring ye see on this lifted hand pardiè,’

*Toll slowly.*

‘If, this hour, on castle-wall can be room for steed  
from stall,

Shall be also room for *me*.

## LXXVIII.

‘So the sweet saints with me be,’ (did she utter  
solemnly)

*Toll slowly.*

‘If a man, this eventide, on this castle wall will ride,  
He shall ride the same with *me*.’

## LXXIX.

Oh, he sprang up in the selle and he laughed out  
bitter-well,—

*Toll slowly.*

‘Wouldst thou ride among the leaves, as we used on  
other eves,

To hear chime a vesper-bell?’

LXXX.

She clung closer to his knee—‘Ay, beneath the cypress-tree!’

*Toll slowly.*

‘Mock me not, for elsewhere than along the green-wood fair

Have I ridden fast with thee.

LXXXI.

‘Fast I rode with new-made vows from my angry kinsman’s house :’

*Toll slowly.*

‘What, and would you men should reckon that I dared more for love’s sake

As a bride than as a spouse ?

LXXXII.

‘What, and would you it should fall, as a proverb, before all,’

*Toll slowly.*

‘That a bride may keep your side while through castle-gate you ride,

Yet eschew the castle-wall ?’

LXXXIII.

Ho! the breach yawns into ruin and roars up against her suing,

*Toll slowly.*

With the inarticulate din and the dreadful falling in—  
Shrieks of doing and undoing !

## LXXXIV.

Twice he wrung her hands in twain, but the small hands  
closed again.

*Toll slowly.*

Back he reined the steed—back, back! but she trailed  
along his track

With a frantic clasp and strain.

## LXXXV.

Evermore the foemen pour through the crash of window  
and door,

*Toll slowly.*

And the shouts of Leigh and Leigh, and the shrieks of  
‘kill!’ and ‘flee!’

Strike up clear amid the roar.

## LXXXVI.

Thrice he wrung her hands in twain, but they closed  
and clung again,

*Toll slowly.*

While she clung, as one, withstood, clasps a Christ  
upon the rood,

In a spasm of deathly pain.

## LXXXVII.

She clung wild and she clung mute with her shud-  
dering lips half-shut;

*Toll slowly.*



Her head fallen as half in swoond, hair and knee  
swept on the ground,  
She clung wild to stirrup and foot.

LXXXVIII.

Back he reined his steed back-thrown on the slippery  
coping-stone ;

*Toll slowly.*

Back the iron hoofs did grind on the battlement  
behind

Whence a hundred feet went down :

LXXXIX.

And his heel did press and goad on the quivering flank  
bestrode,—

*Toll slowly.*

‘Friends and brothers, save my wife! Pardon, sweet,  
in change for life,—

But I ride alone to God.’

XC.

Straight as if the Holy name had upbreathed her like  
a flame,

*Toll slowly.*

She upsprang, she rose upright, in his selle she sate  
in sight,

By her love she overcame.

## XCI.

And her head was on his breast where she smiled as  
one at rest,—

*Toll slowly.*

‘Ring,’ she cried, ‘O vesper-bell in the beechwood’s  
old chapelle—

But the passing-bell rings best!’

## XCII.

They have caught out at the rein which Sir Guy threw  
loose—in vain,

*Toll slowly.*

For the horse in stark despair, with his front hoofs  
poised in air,

On the last verge rears amain.

## XCIII.

Now he hangs, he rocks between, and his nostrils  
curdle in,

*Toll slowly.*

Now he shivers head and hoof and the flakes of foam  
fall off,

And his face grows fierce and thin:

## XCIV.

And a look of human woe from his staring eyes did  
go,

*Toll slowly.*

And a sharp cry uttered he, in a foretold agony  
Of the headlong death below,—

XCV.

And, Ring, ring, thou passing-bell,' still she cried,  
'i' the old chapelle !'

*Toll slowly.*

Then back-toppling, crashing back—a dead weight  
flung out to wrack,

Horse and riders overfell.

I.

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang  
west,

*Toll slowly.*

And I read this ancient Rhyme, in the churchyard,  
while the chime

Slowly tolled for one at rest.

II.

The abeles moved in the sun, and the river smooth did  
run,

*Toll slowly.*

And the ancient Rhyme rang strange, with its passion  
and its change,

Here, where all done lay undone.

III.

And beneath a willow tree I a little grave did see,

*Toll slowly.*

Where was *graved*,—*HERE UNDEFILED, LIETH MAUD,*  
*A THREE-YEAR CHILD,*  
*EIGHTEEN HUNDRED, FORTY-THREE.*

## IV.

Then, O spirits. did I say, ye who rode so fast that  
 day,

*Toll slowly.*

Did star-wheels and angel wings with their holy win-  
 nowings

Keep beside you all the way?

## V.

Though in passion ye would dash with a blind and  
 heavy crash,

*Toll slowly.*

Up against the thick-bossed shield of God's judgment  
 in the field,—

Though your heart and brain were rash,—

## VI.

Now, your will is all unwilling, now, your pulses are  
 all stilled,

*Toll slowly.*

Now, ye lie as meek and mild (whereso laid) as Maud  
 the child,

Whose small grave was lately filled.

VII.

Beating heart and burning brow, ye are very patient  
now,

*Toll slowly.*

And the children might be bold to pluck the kingcups  
from your mould

Ere a month had let them grow.

VIII.

And you let the goldfinch sing in the alder near in  
spring,

*Toll slowly.*

Let her build her nest and sit all the three weeks out  
on it,

Murmuring not at anything.

IX.

In your patience ye are strong, cold and heat ye take  
not wrong,

*Toll slowly.*

When the trumpet of the angel blows eternity's evangel,  
Time will seem to you not long.

X.

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang  
west,

*Toll slowly.*

And I said in underbreath,—All our life is mixed with  
death,

And who knoweth which is best?

## XI.

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang  
west,

*Toll slowly.*

And I smiled to think God's greatness flowed around  
our incompleteness,—

Round our restlessness, His rest.

## THE ROMANCE OF THE SWAN'S NEST.

---

So the dreams depart,  
So the fading phantoms flee,  
And the sharp reality  
Now must act its part.

WESTWOOD'S *Beads from a Rosary*.

### I.

LITTLE Ellie sits alone  
'Mid the beeches of a meadow  
By a stream-side on the grass,  
And the trees are showering down  
Doubles of their leaves in shadow  
On her shining hair and face.

### II.

She has thrown her bonnet by,  
And her feet she has been dipping  
In the shallow water's flow:  
Now she holds them nakedly  
In her hands, all sleek and dripping,  
While she rocketh to and fro.

## III.

Little Ellie sits alone,  
And the smile she softly uses  
Fills the silence like a speech  
While she thinks what shall be done,  
And the sweetest pleasure chooses  
For her future within reach.

## IV.

Little Ellie in her smile  
Chooses—‘I will have a lover,  
Riding on a steed of steeds:  
He shall love me without guile,  
And to *him* I will discover  
The swan's nest among the reeds.

## V.

‘And the steed shall be red-roan,  
And the lover shall be noble,  
With an eye that takes the breath:  
And the lute he plays upon  
Shall strike ladies into trouble,  
As his sword strikes men to death.

## VI.

‘And the steed it shall be shod  
All in silver, housed in azure,  
And the mane shall swim the wind;  
And the hoofs along the sod  
Shall flash outward and keep measure,  
Till the shepherds look behind.



## VII.

'But my lover will not prize  
All the glory that he rides in,  
When he gazes in my face :  
He will say, 'O Love, thine eyes  
Build the shrine my soul abides in,  
And I kneel here for thy grace!'

## VIII.

'Then, ay, then he shall kneel low,  
With the red-roan steed anear him  
Which shall seem to understand,  
Till I answer, 'Rise and go!  
For the world must love and fear him  
Whom I gift with heart and hand.'

## IX.

'Then he will arise so pale,  
I shall feel my own lips tremble  
With a *yes* I must not say,  
Nathless maiden-brave, 'Farewell,'  
I will utter, and dissemble—  
'Light to-morrow with to-day!'

## X.

'Then he'll ride among the hills  
To the wide world past the river,  
There to put away all wrong;  
To make straight distorted wills,  
And to empty the broad quiver  
Which the wicked bear along.

## XI.

‘Three times shall a young foot-page  
Swim the stream and climb the mountain  
And kneel down beside my feet—  
‘Lo, my master sends this gage,  
Lady, for thy pity’s counting!  
What wilt thou exchange for it?’

## XII.

‘And the first time I will send  
A white rosebud for a guerdon,  
And the second time, a glove;  
But the third time—I may bend  
From my pride, and answer—‘Pardon,  
If he comes to take my love.’

## XIII.

‘Then the young foot-page will run,  
Then my lover will ride faster,  
Till he kneeleth at my knee:  
‘I am a duke’s eldest son,  
Thousand serfs do call me master,  
But, O Love, I love but *thee*!’

## XIV.

‘He will kiss me on the mouth  
Then, and lead me as a lover  
Through the crowds that praise his deeds:  
And, when soul-tied by one troth,  
Unto *him* I will discover  
That swan’s nest among the reeds.’

## XV.

Little Ellie, with her smile  
Not yet ended, rose up gaily,  
Tied the bonnet, donned the shoe,  
And went homeward, round a mile,  
Just to see, as she did daily,  
What more eggs were with the two.

## XVI.

Pushing through the elm-tree copse,  
Winding up the stream, light-hearted,  
Where the osier pathway leads,  
Past the boughs she stoops—and stops.  
Lo, the wild swan had deserted,  
And a rat had knawed the reeds!

## XVII.

Ellie went home sad and slow.  
If she found the lover ever,  
With his red-roan steed of steeds,  
Sooth I know not; but I know  
She could never show him—never,  
That swan's nest among the reeds!

## BERTHA IN THE LANE.

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### I.

Put the broidery-frame away,  
For my sewing is all done :  
The last thread is used to-day,  
And I need not join it on.  
Though the clock stands at the noon  
I am weary. I have sewn,  
Sweet, for thee, a wedding-gown.

### II.

Sister, help me to the bed,  
And stand near me, Dearest-sweet.  
Do not shrink nor be afraid,  
Blushing with a sudden heat !  
No one standeth in the street ?—  
By God's love I go to meet,  
Love I thee with love complete.

## III.

Lean thy face down ; drop it in  
These two hands, that I may hold  
'Twixt their palms thy cheek and chin,  
Stroking back the curls of gold :  
'Tis a fair, fair face, in sooth—  
Larger eyes and redder mouth  
Than mine were in my first youth.

## IV.

Thou art younger by seven years—  
Ah!—so bashful at my gaze,  
That the lashes, hung with tears,  
Grow too heavy to upraise?  
I would wound thee by no touch  
Which thy shyness feels as such.  
Dost thou mind me, Dear, so much?

## V.

Have I not been nigh a mother  
To thy sweetness—tell me, Dear?  
Have we not loved one another  
Tenderly, from year to year,  
Since our dying mother mild  
Said with accents undefiled,  
'Child, be mother to this child'!

## VI.

Mother, mother, up in heaven,  
Stand up on the jasper sea,  
And be witness I have given  
All the gifts required of me,—  
Hope that blessed me, bliss that crowned,  
Love that left me with a wound,  
Life itself that turneth round!

## VII.

Mother, mother, thou art kind,  
Thou art standing in the room,  
In a molten glory shrined  
That rays off into the gloom!  
But thy smile is bright and bleak  
Like cold waves—I cannot speak,  
I sob in it, and grow weak.

## VIII.

Ghostly mother, keep aloof  
One hour longer from my soul,  
For I still am thinking of  
Earth's warm-beating joy and dole!  
On my finger is a ring  
Which I still see glittering  
When the night hides everything.

## IX.

Little sister, thou art pale !

Ah, I have a wandering brain—  
But I lose that fever-bale,

And my thoughts grow calm again.  
Lean down closer—closer still !  
I have words thine ear to fill,  
And would kiss thee at my will.

## X.

Dear, I heard thee in the spring,  
Thee and Robert—through the trees,—  
When we all went gathering  
Boughs of May-bloom for the bees.  
Do not start so ! think instead  
How the sunshine over head  
Seemed to trickle through the shade.

## XI.

What a day it was, that day !  
Hills and vales did openly  
Seem to heave and throb away  
At the sight of the great sky .  
And the silence, as it stood  
In the glory's golden flood,  
Audibly did bud, and bud.

## XII.

Through the winding hedgerows green,  
How we wandered, I and you,  
With the bowery tops shut in,  
And the gates that showed the view!  
How we talked there; thrushes soft  
Sang our praises out, or oft  
Bleatings took them from the croft:

## XIII.

Till the pleasure grown too strong  
Left me muter evermore,  
And, the winding road being long,  
I walked out of sight, before,  
And so, wrapt in musings fond,  
Issued (past the wayside pond)  
On the meadow-lands beyond.

## XIV.

I sate down beneath the beech  
Which leans over to the lane,  
And the far sound of your speech  
Did not promise any pain;  
And I blessed you full and free,  
With a smile stooped tenderly  
O'er the May-flowers on my knee.



## XV.

But the sound grew into word  
As the speakers drew more near—  
Sweet, forgive me that I heard  
What you wished me not to hear.  
Do not weep so, do not shake,  
Oh,—I heard thee, Bertha, make  
Good true answers for my sake.

## XVI.

Yes, and HE too! let him stand  
In thy thoughts, untouched by blame.  
Could he help it, if my hand  
He had claimed with hasty claim?  
That was wrong perhaps—but then  
Such things be—and will, again.  
Women cannot judge for men.

## XVII.

Had he seen thee when he swore  
He would love but me alone?  
Thou wast absent, sent before  
To our kin in Sidmouth town.  
When he saw thee who art best  
Past compare, and loveliest,  
He but judged thee as the rest.

## XVIII.

Could we blame him with grave words,  
Thou and I, Dear, if we might?  
Thy brown eyes have looks like birds  
Flying straightway to the light:  
Mine are older.—Hush!—look out—  
Up the street! Is none without?  
How the poplar swings about!

## XIX.

And that hour—beneath the beech,  
When I listened in a dream,  
And he said in his deep speech  
That he owed me all *esteem*,—  
Each word swam in on my brain  
With a dim, dilating pain,  
Till it burst with that last strain.

## XX.

I fell flooded with a dark,  
In the silence of a swoon.  
When I rose, still cold and stark,  
There was night; I saw the moon:  
And the stars, each in its place,  
And the May-blooms on the grass,  
Seemed to wonder what I was.

## XXI.

And I walked as if apart  
From myself, when I could stand,  
And I pitied my own heart,  
As if I held it in my hand,  
Somewhat coldly, with a sense  
Of fulfilled benevolence,  
And a 'Poor thing' negligence.

## XXII.

And I answered coldly too,  
When you met me at the door;  
And I only *heard* the dew  
Dripping from me to the floor:  
And the flowers I bade you see,  
Were too withered for the bee,—  
As my life, henceforth, for me.

## XXIII.

Do not weep so—Dear—heart-warm!  
All was best as it befell.  
If I say he did me harm,  
I speak wild,—I am not well.  
All his words were kind and good—  
*He esteemed me.* Only, blood  
Runs so faint in womanhood!

## XXIV.

Then I always was too grave,—  
Liked the saddest ballad sung,—  
With that look, besides, we have  
In our faces, who die young.  
I had died, Dear, all the same ;  
Life's long, joyous, jostling game  
Is too loud for my meek shame.

## XXV.

We are so unlike each other,  
Thou and I, that none could guess  
We were children of one mother,  
But for mutual tenderness.  
Thou art rose-lined from the cold,  
And meant verily to hold  
Life's pure pleasures manifold.

## XXVI.

I am pale as crocus grows  
Close beside a rose-tree's root ;  
Whosoe'er would reach the rose,  
Treads the crocus underfoot.  
I, like May-bloom on thorn-tree.  
Thou, like merry summer-bee,—  
Fit that I be plucked for thee!

## XXVII.

Yet who plucks me?—no one mourns,  
I have lived my season out,  
And now die of my own thorns  
Which I could not live without.  
Sweet, be merry! How the light  
Comes and goes! If it be night,  
Keep the candles in my sight.

## XXVIII.

Are there footsteps at the door?  
Look out quickly. Yea, or nay?  
Some one might be waiting for  
Some last word that I might say.  
Nay? So best!—so angels would  
Stand off clear from deathly road,  
Not to cross the sight of God.

## XXIX.

Colder grow my hands and feet.  
When I wear the shroud I made,  
Let the folds lie straight and neat,  
And the rosemary be spread,  
That if any friend should come,  
(To see *thee*, Sweet!) all the room  
May be lifted out of gloom.

## XXX.

And, dear Bertha, let me keep  
On my hand this little ring,  
Which at nights, when others sleep,  
I can still see glittering.  
Let me wear it out of sight,  
In the grave,—where it will light  
All the dark up, day and night.

## XXXI.

On that grave drop not a tear!  
Else, though fathom-deep the place,  
Through the woollen shroud I wear  
I shall feel it on my face.  
Rather smile there, blessèd one,  
Thinking of me in the sun,  
Or forget me—smiling on!

## XXXII.

Art thou near me? nearer! so—  
Kiss me close upon the eyes,  
That the earthly light may go  
Sweetly, as it used to rise  
When I watched the morning-grey  
Strike, betwixt the hills, the way  
He was sure to come that day.

## XXXIII.

So,—no more vain words be said !  
The hosannas nearer roll.  
Mother, smile now on thy Dead,  
I am death-strong in my soul.  
Mystic Dove alit on cross,  
Guide the poor bird of the snows  
Through the snow-wind above loss !

## XXXIV.

Jesus, Victim, comprehending  
Love's divine self-abnegation,  
Cleanse my love in its self-spending,  
And absorb the poor libation !  
Wind my thread of life up higher,  
Up, through angels' hands of fire !  
I aspire while I expire.

## LADY GERALDINE'S COURTSHIP.

A ROMANCE OF THE AGE.

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*A poet writes to his friend.* PLACE—*A room in Wycombe Hall.*  
TIME—*Late in the evening.*

### I.

DEAR my friend and fellow-student, I would lean my  
spirit o'er you!  
Down the purple of this chamber tears should scarcely  
run at will.  
I am humbled who was humble. Friend, I bow my  
head before you:  
You should lead me to my peasants, but their faces  
are too still.

### II.

There's a lady, an earl's daughter,—she is proud and  
she is noble,  
And she treads the crimson carpet and she breathes  
the perfumed air,  
And a kingly blood sends glances up, her princely eye  
to trouble,  
And the shadow of a monarch's crown is softened in  
her hair.



## III.

She has halls among the woodlands, she has castles  
by the breakers,  
She has farms and she has manors, she can threaten  
and command,  
And the palpitating engines snort in steam across her  
acres,  
As they mark upon the blasted heaven the measure  
of the land.

## IV.

There are none of England's daughters who can show  
a prouder presence ;  
Upon princely suitors praying, she has looked in her  
disdain.  
She was sprung of English nobles, I was born of En-  
glish peasants ;  
What was *I* that I should love her, save for compe-  
tence to pain ?

## V.

I was only a poor poet, made for singing at her case-  
ment,  
As the finches or the thrushes, while she thought of  
other things.  
Oh, she walked so high above me, she appeared to my  
abasement,  
In her lovely silken murmur, like an angel clad in  
wings !

## VI.

Many vassals bow before her as her carriage sweeps  
their door-ways ;  
She has blest their little children, as a priest or  
queen were she :  
Far too tender, or too cruel far, her smile upon the  
poor was,  
For I thought it was the same smile which she used  
to smile on *me*.

## VII.

She has voters in the commons, she has lovers in the  
palace,  
And of all the fair court-ladies, few have jewels half  
as fine ;  
Oft the prince has named her beauty 'twixt the red  
wine and the chalice :  
Oh, and what was *I* to love her? my beloved, my  
Geraldine!

## VIII.

Yet I could not choose but love her: I was born to  
poet-uses,  
To love all things set above me, all of good and all of  
fair.  
Nymphs of mountain, not of valley, we are wont to  
call the Muses ;  
And in nympholeptic climbing, poets pass from mount  
to star.

## IX.

And because I was a poet, and because the public  
praised me,  
With a critical deduction for the modern writer's  
fault,  
I could sit at rich men's tables,—though the courtesies  
that raised me,  
Still suggested clear between us the pale spectrum of  
the salt.

## X.

And they praised me in her presence;—‘Will your  
book appear this summer?’  
Then returning to each other—‘Yes, our plans are for  
the moors.’  
Then with whisper dropped behind me—‘There he is!  
the latest comer.  
Oh, she only likes his verses! what is over, she  
endures.

## XI.

‘Quite low-born, self-educated! somewhat gifted  
though by nature,  
And we make a point of asking him,—of being very  
kind.  
You may speak, he does not hear you! and besides,  
he writes no satire,—  
All these serpents kept by charmers leave the natural  
sting behind.’

## XII.

I grew scornfuller, grew colder, as I stood up there  
among them,  
Till as frost intense will burn you, the cold scorning  
scorched my brow ;  
When a sudden silver speaking, gravely cadenced,  
over-rung them,  
And a sudden silken stirring touched my inner nature  
through.

## XIII.

I looked upward and beheld her: with a calm and  
regnant spirit,  
Slowly round she swept her eyelids, and said clear be-  
fore them all—  
'Have you such superfluous honour, sir, that able to  
confer it  
You will come down, Mister Bertram, as my guest to  
Wycombe Hall?'

## XIV.

Here she paused ; she had been paler at the first word  
of her speaking,  
But because a silence followed it, blushed somewhat,  
as for shame,  
Then, as scorning her own feeling, resumed calmly—  
'I am seeking  
More distinction than these gentlemen think worthy  
of my claim.

## XV.

'Ne'ertheless, you see, I seek it—not because I am a woman,'

(Here her smile sprang like a fountain and, so, overflowed her mouth)

'But because my woods in Sussex have some purple shades at gloaming

Which are worthy of a king in state, or poet in his youth.

## XVI.

'I invite you, Mister Bertram, to no scene for worldly speeches—

Sir, I scarce should dare—but only where God asked the thrushes first:

And if *you* will sing beside them, in the covert of my beeches,

I will thank you for the woodlands,—for the human world, at worst.'

## XVII.

Then she smiled around right childly, then she gazed around right queenly,

And I bowed—I could not answer; alternated light and gloom—

While as one who quells the lions, with a steady eye serenely,

She, with level fronting eyelids, passed out stately from the room.

## XVIII.

Oh, the bless'd woods of Sussex, I can hear them still  
    around me,  
With their leafy tide of greenery still rippling up the  
    wind.  
Oh, the curs'd woods of Sussex! where the hunter's  
    arrow found me,  
When a fair face and a tender voice had made me mad  
    and blind!

## XIX.

In that ancient hall of Wycombe thronged the nume-  
    rous guests invited,  
And the lovely London ladies trod the floors with  
    gliding feet;  
And their voices low with fashion, not with feeling,  
    softly freighted  
All the air about the windows with elastic laughter  
    sweet.

## XX.

For at eve the open windows flung their light out on  
    the terrace  
Which the floating orbs of curtains did with gradual  
    shadow sweep,  
While the swans upon the river, fed at morning by  
    the heiress,  
Trembled downward through their snowy wings at  
    music in their sleep.

## XXI.

And there evermore was music, both of instrument  
    and singing,  
Till the finches of the shrubberies grew restless in the  
    dark ;  
But the cedars stood up motionless, each in a moon-  
    light-ringing,  
And the deer, half in the glimmer, strewed the hollows  
    of the park.

## XXII.

And though sometimes she would bind me with her  
    silver-corded speeches  
To commix my words and laughter with the converse  
    and the jest,  
Oft I sat apart and, gazing on the river through the  
    beeches,  
Heard, as pure the swans swam down it, her pure voice  
    o'erfloat the rest.

## XXIII.

In the morning, horn of huntsman, hoof of steed and  
    laugh of rider,  
Spread out cheery from the court-yard till we lost  
    them in the hills,  
While herself and other ladies, and her suitors left  
    beside her,  
Went a-wandering up the gardens through the laurels  
    and abeles.

## XXIV.

Thus, her foot upon the new-mown grass, bareheaded,  
    with the flowing  
Of the virginal white vesture gathered closely to her  
    throat,  
And the golden ringlets in her neck just quickened  
    by her going,  
And appearing to breathe sun for air, and doubting if  
    to float,—

## XXV.

With a bunch of dewy maple, which her right hand  
    held above her,  
And which trembled a green shadow in betwixt her  
    and the skies,  
As she turned her face in going, thus, she drew me on  
    to love her,  
And to worship the divineness of the smile hid in her  
    eyes.

## XXVI.

For her eyes alone smile constantly; her lips have  
    serious sweetness,  
And her front is calm, the dimple rarely ripples on  
    the cheek;  
But her deep blue eyes smile constantly, as if they in  
    discreetness  
Kept the secret of a happy dream she did not care to  
    speak.



## XXVII.

Thus she drew me the first morning, out across into  
the garden,  
And I walked among her noble friends and could not  
keep behind.  
Spake she unto all and unto me—‘ Behold, I am the  
warden  
Of the song-birds in these lindens, which are cages to  
their mind.

## XXVIII.

‘ But within this swarded circle into which the lime-  
walk brings us,  
Whence the beeches, rounded greenly, stand away in  
reverent fear,  
I will let no music enter, saving what the fountain  
sings us  
Which the lilies round the basin may seem pure  
enough to hear.

## XXIX.

‘ The live air that waves the lilies waves the slender  
jet of water  
Like a holy thought sent feebly up from soul of fast-  
ing saint :  
Whereby lies a marble Silence, sleeping, (Lough the  
sculptor wrought her)  
So asleep she is forgetting to say Hush!—a fancy  
quaint.

## XXX.

‘Mark how heavy white her eyelids! not a dream between them lingers;  
And the left hand’s index droppeth from the lips upon the cheek:  
While the right hand,—with the symbol-rose held slack within the fingers,—  
Has fallen backward in the basin—yet this Silence will not speak!

## XXXI.

‘That the essential meaning growing may exceed the special symbol,  
Is the thought as I conceive it: it applies more high and low.  
Our true noblemen will often through right nobleness grow humble,  
And assert an inward honour by denying outward show.’

## XXXII.

‘Nay, your Silence,’ said I, ‘truly, holds her symbol rose but slackly,  
Yet *she holds it*, or would scarcely be a Silence to our ken:  
And your nobles wear their ermine on the outside, or walk blackly  
In the presence of the social law as mere ignoble men.

## XXXIII.

'Let the poets dream such dreaming! madam, in these  
British islands  
'Tis the substance that wanes ever, 'tis the symbol  
that exceeds.  
Soon we shall have nought but symbol: and, for  
statues like this Silence,  
Shall accept the rose's image—in another case, the  
weed's.'

## XXXIV.

'Not so quickly,' she retorted,—'I confess, where'er  
you go, you  
Find for things, names—shows for actions, and pure  
gold for honour clear:  
But when all is run to symbol in the Social, I will  
throw you  
The world's book which now reads drily, and sit down  
with Silence here.'

## XXXV.

Half in playfulness she spoke, I thought, and half in  
indignation;  
Friends who listened, laughed her words off, while her  
lovers deemed her fair:  
A fair woman, flushed with feeling, in her noble-lighted  
station  
Near the statue's white reposing—and both bathed in  
sunny air!

## XXXVI.

With the trees round, not so distant but you heard  
    their vernal murmur,  
And beheld in light and shadow the leaves in and  
    outward move,  
And the little fountain leaping toward the sun-heart  
    to be warmer,  
Then recoiling in a tremble from the too much light  
    above.

## XXXVII.

'Tis a picture for remembrance. And thus, morning  
    after morning,  
Did I follow as she drew me by the spirit to her  
    feet.  
Why, her greyhound followed also! dogs—we both  
    were dogs for scorning—  
To be sent back when she pleased it and her path lay  
    through the wheat.

## XXXVIII.

And thus, morning after morning, spite of vows and  
    spite of sorrow,  
Did I follow at her drawing, while the week-days  
    passed along,  
Just to feed the swans this noontide, or to see the  
    fawns to-morrow,  
Or to teach the hill-side echo some sweet Tuscan in a  
    song

## XXXIX.

Ay, for sometimes on the hill-side, while we sate down  
in the gowans,  
With the forest green behind us and its shadow cast  
before,  
And the river running under, and across it from the  
rowans  
A brown partridge whirring near us till we felt the  
air it bore,—

## XL.

There, obedient to her praying, did I read aloud the  
poems  
Made to Tuscan flutes, or instruments more various  
of our own ;  
Read the pastoral parts of Spenser, or the subtle in-  
terflowings  
Found in Petrarch's sonnets—here's the book, the  
leaf is folded down !

## XLI.

Or at times a modern volume, Wordsworth's solemn-  
thoughted idyl,  
Howitt's ballad-verse, or Tennyson's enchanted re-  
verie,—  
Or from Browning some 'Pomegranate,' which, if cut  
deep down the middle,  
Shows a heart within blood-tinctured, of a veined  
humanity.

## XLII.

Or at times I read there, hoarsely, some new poem of  
my making:  
Poets ever fail in reading their own verses to their  
worth,  
For the echo in you breaks upon the words which you  
are speaking,  
And the chariot wheels jar in the gate through which  
you drive them forth.

## XLIII.

After, when we were grown tired of books, the silence  
round us flinging  
A slow arm of sweet compression, felt with beatings  
at the breast,  
She would break out on a sudden in a gush of wood  
land singing,  
Like a child's emotion in a god—a naiad tired of rest.

## XLIV.

Oh, to see or hear her singing! scarce I know which  
is divinest,  
For her looks sing too—she modulates her gestures  
on the tune,  
And her mouth stirs with the song, like song; and  
when the notes are finest,  
'Tis the eyes that shoot out vocal light and seem to  
swell them on.

## XLV.

Then we talked—oh, how we talked! her voice, so  
cadenced in the talking,  
Made another singing—of the soul! a music without  
bars :  
While the leafy sounds of woodlands, humming round  
where we were walking,  
Brought interposition worthy-sweet,—as skies about  
the stars.

## XLVI.

And she spake such good thoughts natural, as if she  
always thought them ;  
She had sympathies so rapid, open, free as bird on  
branch,  
Just as ready to fly east as west, whichever way be-  
sought them,  
In the birchen-wood a chirrup, or a cock-crow in the  
grange.

## XLVII.

In her utmost lightness there is truth—and often she  
speaks lightly,  
Has a grace in being gay which even mournful souls  
approve,  
For the root of some grave earnest thought is under-  
struck so rightly  
As to justify the foliage and the waving flowers  
above.

## XLVIII.

And she talked on—*we* talked, rather! upon all things,  
substance, shadow,  
Of the sheep that browsed the grasses, of the reapers  
in the corn,  
Of the little children from the schools, seen winding  
through the meadow,  
Of the poor rich world beyond them, still kept poorer  
by its scorn.

## XLIX.

So, of men, and so, of letters—books are men of  
higher stature,  
And the only men that speak aloud for future times  
to hear;  
So, of mankind in the abstract, which grows slowly  
into nature,  
Yet will lift the cry of 'progress,' as it trod from  
sphere to sphere.

## L.

And her custom was to praise me when I said,—'The  
Age culls simples,  
With a broad clown's back turned broadly to the  
glory of the stars.  
We are gods by our own reck'ning, and may well shut  
up the temples,  
And wield on, amid the incense-steam, the thunder of  
our cars.



## II.

' For we throw out acclamations of self-thanking, self-  
admiring,  
With, at every mile run faster,—'O the wondrous  
wondrous age !'  
Little thinking if we work our SOULS as nobly as our  
iron,  
Or if angels will commend us at the goal of pilgrimage.

## LII.

' Why, what *is* this patient entrance into nature's  
deep resources  
But the child's most gradual learning to walk upright  
without bane ?  
When we drive out, from the cloud of steam, majes-  
tical white horses,  
Are we greater than the first men who led black ones  
by the mane ?

## LIII.

' If we trod the deeps of ocean, if we struck the stars  
in rising,  
If we wrapped the globe intensely with one hot  
electric breath,  
'Twere but power within our tether, no new spirit-  
power comprising,  
And in life we were not greater men, nor bolder men  
in death.'

## LIV.

She was patient with my talking; and I loved her,  
loved her certes  
As I loved all heavenly objects, with uplifted eyes and  
hands;  
As I loved pure inspirations, loved the graces, loved  
the virtues,  
In a Love content with writing his own name on  
desert sands.

## LV.

Or at least I thought so, purely; thought no idiot  
Hope was raising  
Any crown to crown Love's silence, silent Love that  
sate alone:  
Out, alas! the stag is like me, he that tries to go on  
grazing  
With the great deep gun-wound in his neck, then  
reels with sudden moan.

## LVI.

It was thus I reeled. I told you that her hand had  
many suitors;  
But she smiles them down imperially as Venus did  
the waves,  
And with such a gracious coldness that they cannot  
press their futures  
On the present of her courtesy, which yieldingly  
enslaves.

## LVII.

And this morning as I sat alone within the inner  
chamber  
With the great saloon beyond it, lost in pleasant  
thought serene,  
For I had been reading Camöens, that poem you  
remember,  
Which his lady's eyes are praised in as the sweetest  
ever seen.

## LVIII.

And the book lay open, and my thought flew from it,  
taking from it  
A vibration and impulsion to an end beyond its own,  
As the branch of a green osier, when a child would  
overcome it,  
Springs up freely from his claspings and goes swinging  
in the sun.

## LIX.

As I mused I heard a murmur; it grew deep as it  
grew longer,  
Speakers using earnest language—'Lady Geraldine,  
*you would!*'  
And I heard a voice that pleaded, ever on in accents  
stronger,  
As a sense of reason gave it power to make its rhetoric  
good.

## LX.

Well I knew that voice ; it was an earl's, of soul that  
    matched his station,  
Soul completed into lordship, might and right read  
    on his brow ;  
Very finely courteous ; far too proud to doubt his  
    domination  
Of the common people, he atones for grandeur by a  
    bow.

## LXI.

High straight forehead, nose of eagle, cold blue eyes  
    of less expression  
Than resistance, coldly casting off the looks of other  
    men,  
As steel, arrows ; unelastic lips which seem to taste  
    possession  
And be cautious lest the common air should injure or  
    distrain.

## LXII.

For the rest, accomplished, upright,—ay, and standing  
    by his order  
With a bearing not ungraceful ; fond of art and letters  
    too ;  
Just a good man made a proud man,—as the sandy  
    rocks that border  
A wild coast, by circumstances, in a regnant ebb and  
    flow.

## LXIII.

Thus, I knew that voice, I heard it, and I could not  
help the hearkening :  
In the room I stood up blindly, and my burning heart  
within  
Seemed to seethe and fuse my senses till they ran on  
all sides darkening,  
And scorched, weighed like melted metal round my  
feet that stood therein.

## LXIV.

And that voice, I heard it pleading, for love's sake,  
for wealth, position,  
For the sake of liberal uses and great actions to be  
done—  
And she interrupted gently, 'Nay, my lord, the old  
tradition  
Of your Normans, by some worthier hand than mine  
is, should be won.'

## LXV.

'Ah, that white hand!' he said quickly,—and in his  
he either drew it  
Or attempted—for with gravity and instance she  
replied,  
'Nay indeed, my lord, this talk is vain, and we had  
best eschew it  
And pass on, like friends, to other points less easy to  
decide.'

## LXVI.

What he said again, I know not : it is likely that his  
trouble  
Worked his pride up to the surface, for she answered  
in slow scorn,  
'And your lordship judges rightly. Whom I marry,  
shall be noble,  
Ay, and wealthy. I shall never blush to think how he  
was born.'

## LXVII.

There, I maddened ! her words stung me. Life swept  
through me into fever,  
And my soul sprang up astonished, sprang full-  
statured in an hour.  
Know you what it is when anguish, with apocalyptic  
NEVER,  
To a Pythian height dilates you, and despair sublimates  
to power ?

## LXVIII.

From my brain the soul-wings budded, waved a flame  
about my body,  
Whence conventions coiled to ashes. I felt self-drawn  
out, as man,  
From amalgamate false natures, and I saw the skies  
grow ruddy  
With the deepening feet of angels, and I knew what  
spirits can.

## LXIX.

I was mad, inspired—say either! (anguish worketh  
inspiration)  
Was a man or beast—perhaps so, for the tiger roars  
when speared;  
And I walked on, step by step along the level of my  
passion—  
Oh my soul! and passed the doorway to her face, and  
never feared.

## LXX.

*He* had left her, peradventure, when my footstep  
proved my coming,  
But for *her*—she half arose, then sate, grew scarlet  
and grew pale.  
Oh, she trembled! 'tis so always with a worldly man  
or woman  
In the presence of true spirits; what else *can* they do  
but quail?

## LXXI.

Oh, she fluttered like a tame bird, in among its forest-  
brothers  
Far too strong for it; then drooping, bowed her face  
upon her hands;  
And I spake out wildly, fiercely, brutal truths of her  
and others:  
*I*, she planted in the desert, swathed her, windlike,  
with my sands.

## LXXII.

I plucked up her social fictions, bloody-rooted though  
leaf-verdant,  
Trod them down with words of shaming,—all the  
purple and the gold,  
All the 'landed stakes' and lordships, all that spirits  
pure and ardent  
Are cast out of love and honour because chancing not  
to hold.

## LXXIII.

'For myself I do not argue,' said I, 'though I love  
you, madam,  
But for better souls that nearer to the height of yours  
have trod:  
And this age shows, to my thinking, still more infidels  
to Adam  
Than directly, by profession, simple infidels to God.

## LXXIV.

'Yet, O God,' I said, 'O grave,' I said, 'O mother's  
heart and bosom,  
With whom first and last are equal, saint and corpse  
and little child!  
We are fools to your deductions, in these figments of  
heart-closing;  
We are traitors to your causes, in these sympathies  
defiled.



## LXXV.

‘ Learn more reverence, madam, not for rank or wealth  
—*that* needs no learning.

*That* comes quickly, quick as sin does, ay, and culminates to sin;

But for Adam’s seed, MAN! Trust me, ’tis a clay  
above your scorning,

With God’s image stamped upon it, and God’s kindling breath within.

## LXXVI.

‘ What right have you, madam, gazing in your palace mirror daily,

Getting so by heart your beauty which all others must adore,

While you draw the golden ringlets down your fingers,  
to vow gaily

You will wed no man that’s only good to God, and nothing more?

## LXXVII.

‘ Why, what right have you, made fair by that same God, the sweetest woman

Of all women He has fashioned, with your lovely spirit-face

Which would seem too near to vanish if its smile were not so human,

And your voice of holy sweetness, turning common words to grace,

## LXXVIII.

'What right *can* you have, God's other works to scorn,  
despise, revile them  
In the gross, as mere men, broadly—not as *noble* men,  
forsooth,—  
As mere Parias of the outer world, forbidden to assoil  
them  
In the hope of living, dying, near that sweetness of  
your mouth?

## LXXIX.

'Have you any answer, madam? If my spirit were  
less earthly,  
If its instrument were gifted with a better silver  
string,  
I would kneel down where I stand, and say—Behold  
me! I am worthy  
Of thy loving, for I love thee. I am worthy as a king.

## LXXX.

'As it is—your ermined pride, I swear, shall feel this  
stain upon her,  
That *I*, poor, weak, tost with passion, scorned by me  
and you again,  
Love you, madam, dare to love you, to my grief and  
your dishonour,  
To my endless desolation, and your impotent disdain!'

## LXXXI.

More mad words like these—mere madness! friend, I  
    need not write them fuller,  
For I hear my hot soul dropping on the lines in  
    showers of tears.  
Oh, a woman! friend, a woman! why, a beast had  
    scarce been duller  
Than roar bestial loud complaints against the shining  
    of the spheres.

## LXXXII.

But at last there came a pause. I stood all vibrating  
    with thunder  
Which my soul had used. The silence drew her face  
    up like a call.  
Could you guess what word she uttered? She looked  
    up, as if in wonder,  
With tears beaded on her lashes, and said—‘Bertram!’  
    it was all.

## LXXXIII.

If she had cursed me, and she might have, or if even  
    with queenly bearing  
Which at need is used by women, she had risen up  
    and said,  
‘Sir, you are my guest, and therefore I have given you  
    a full hearing :  
Now, beseech you, choose a name exacting somewhat  
    less, instead!’—

## LXXXIV.

I had borne it: but that 'Bertram'—why, it lies there  
on the paper  
A mere word, without her accent, and you cannot  
judge the weight  
Of the calm which crushed my passion: I seemed  
drowning in a vapour;  
And her gentleness destroyed me whom her scorn  
made desolate.

## LXXXV.

So, struck backward and exhausted by that inward  
flow of passion  
Which had rushed on, sparing nothing, into forms of  
abstract truth,  
By a logic agonizing through unseemly demonstra-  
tion,  
And by youth's own anguish turning grimly grey the  
hairs of youth,—

## LXXXVI.

By the sense accursed and instant, that if even I spake  
wisely  
I spake basely—using truth, if what I spake indeed  
was true,  
To avenge wrong on a woman—*her*, who sate there  
weighing nicely  
A poor manhood's worth, found guilty of such deeds  
as I could do!—

## LXXXVII.

By such wrong and woe exhausted—what I suffered  
and occasioned,—  
As a wild horse through a city runs with lightning in  
his eyes,  
And then dashing at a church's cold and passive wall,  
impassioned,  
Strikes the death into his burning brain, and blindly  
drops and dies—

## LXXXVIII.

So I fell, struck down before her—do you blame me,  
friend, for weakness?  
'Twas my strength of passion slew me!—fell before  
her like a stone;  
Fast the dreadful world rolled from me on its roaring  
wheels of blackness:  
When the light came I was lying in this chamber and  
alone.

## LXXXIX.

Oh, of course she charged her lacqueys to bear out  
the sickly burden,  
And to cast it from her scornful sight, but not *beyond*  
the gate;  
She is too kind to be cruel, and too haughty not to  
pardon  
Such a man as I; 'twere something to be level to her  
hate.

## XC.

But for me—you now are conscious why, my friend, I  
write this letter,  
How my life is read all backward, and the charm of  
life undone.  
I shall leave her house at dawn; I would to-night, if  
I were better—  
And I charge my soul to hold my body strengthened  
for the sun.

## XCI.

When the sun has dyed the oriel, I depart, with no  
last gazes,  
No weak moanings, (one word only, left in writing for  
her hands,)  
Out of reach of all derision, and some unavailing  
praises,  
To make front against this anguish in the far and  
foreign lands.

## XCII.

Blame me not. I would not squander life in grief—I  
am abstemious.  
I but nurse my spirit's falcon that its wing may soar  
again.  
There's no room for tears of weakness in the blind  
eyes of a Phemius:  
Into work the poet kneads them, and he does not  
die *till then*.

## CONCLUSION.

### I.

Bertram finished the last pages, while along the silence  
ever

Still in hot and heavy splashes fell the tears on every  
leaf.

Having ended he leans backward in his chair, with lips  
that quiver

From the deep unspoken, ay, and deep unwritten  
thoughts of grief.

### II.

Soh! how still the lady standeth! 'Tis a dream—a  
dream of mercies!

'Twixt the purple lattice-curtains how she standeth  
still and pale!

'Tis a vision, sure, of mercies, sent to soften his self  
curses,

Sent to sweep a patient quiet o'er the tossing of his  
wail.

## III.

*Poe's note*  
'Eyes,' he said, 'now throbbing through me! are ye  
eyes that did undo me?

Shining eyes, like antique jewels set in Parian statue-  
stone!

Underneath that calm white forehead are ye ever  
burning torrid

O'er the desolate sand-desert of my heart and life  
undone?'

## IV.

With a murmurous stir uncertain, in the air the  
purple curtain

Swelleth in and swelleth out around her motionless  
pale brows,

While the gliding of the river sends a rippling noise  
for ever

Through the open casement whitened by the moon-  
light's slant repose.

## V.

Said he—'Vision of a lady! stand there silent, stand  
there steady!

Now I see it plainly, plainly, now I cannot hope or  
doubt—

There, the brows of mild repression—there, the lips  
of silent passion,

Curv'd like an archer's bow to send the bitter arrows  
out.'



## VI.

Ever, evermore the while in a slow silence she kept  
smiling,  
And approached him slowly, slowly, in a gliding mea-  
sured pace ;  
With her two white hands extended as if praying one  
offended,  
And a look of supplication gazing earnest in his face.

## VII.

Said he—‘ Wake me by no gesture,—sound of breath,  
or stir of vesture !  
Let the blessèd apparition melt not yet to its divine !  
No approaching—hush, no breathing ! or my heart  
must swoon to death in  
The too utter life thou bringest, O thou dream of  
Geraldine !’

## VIII.

Ever, evermore the while in a slow silence she kept  
smiling,  
But the tears ran over lightly from her eyes and  
tenderly :—  
‘ Dost thou, Bertram, truly love me ? Is no woman  
far above me  
Found more worthy of thy poet-heart than such a  
one as *I* ?’

## IX.

Said he—'I would dream so ever, like the flowing of  
that river,  
Flowing ever in a shadow greenly onward to the sea!  
So, thou vision of all sweetness, princely to a full completeness  
Would my heart and life flow onward, deathward,  
through this dream of THEE!'

## X.

Ever, evermore the while in a slow silence she kept  
smiling,  
While the silver tears ran faster down the blushing  
of her cheeks;  
Then with both her hands enfolding both of his, she  
softly told him,  
'Bertram, if I say I love thee, . . . 'tis the vision only  
speaks.'

## XI.

Softened, quickened to adore her, on his knee he fell  
before her,  
And she whispered low in triumph, 'It shall be as I  
have sworn.  
Very rich he is in virtues, very noble—noble, certes;  
And I shall not blush in knowing that men call him  
lowly born.'

THE

RUNAWAY SLAVE AT PILGRIM'S POINT.



I.

I STAND on the mark beside the shore  
Of the first white pilgrim's bended knee,  
Where exile turned to ancestor,  
And God was thanked for liberty.  
I have run through the night, my skin is as dark,  
I bend my knee down on this mark:  
I look on the sky and the sea.

II.

O pilgrim-souls, I speak to you!  
I see you come proud and slow  
From the land of the spirits pale as dew,  
And round me and round me ye go.  
O pilgrims, I have gasped and run  
All night long from the whips of one  
Who in your names works sin and woe!

## III.

And thus I thought that I would come  
And kneel here where ye knelt before,  
And feel your souls around me hum  
In undertone to the ocean's roar;  
And lift my black face, my black hand,  
Here, in your names, to curse this land  
Ye blessed in freedom's, evermore.

## IV.

I am black, I am black,  
And yet God made me, they say:  
But if He did so, smiling back  
He must have cast his work away  
Under the feet of his white creatures,  
With a look of scorn, that the dusky features  
Might be trodden again to clay.

## V.

And yet He has made dark things  
To be glad and merry as light:  
There's a little dark bird sits and sings,  
There's a dark stream ripples out of sight,  
And the dark frogs chant in the safe morass,  
And the sweetest stars are made to pass  
O'er the face of the darkest night.

## VI.

But *we* who are dark, we are dark !  
Ah God, we have no stars !  
About our souls in care and cark  
Our blackness shuts like prison-bars :  
The poor souls crouch so far behind  
That never a comfort can they find  
By reaching through the prison-bars.

## VII.

Indeed we live beneath the sky,  
That great smooth Hand of God stretched out  
On all His children fatherly,  
To save them from the dread and doubt  
Which would be if, from this low place,  
All opened straight up to His face  
Into the grand eternity.

## VIII.

And still God's sunshine and His frost,  
They make us hot, they make us cold,  
As if we were not black and lost ;  
And the beasts and birds, in wood and fold,  
Do fear and take us for very men :  
Could the weep-poor-will or the cat of the glen  
Look into my eyes and be bold ?

## IX.

I am black, I am black !

But, once, I laughed in girlish glee,  
For one of my colour stood in the track

Where the drivers drove, and looked at me,  
And tender and full was the look he gave—  
Could a slave look so at another slave?—

I look at the sky and the sea.

## X.

And from that hour our spirits grew

As free as if unsold, unbought :

Oh, strong enough, since we were two,

To conquer the world, we thought.

The drivers drove us day by day ;

We did not mind, we went one way,

And no better a freedom sought.

## XI.

In the sunny ground between the canes,

He said ' I love you ' as he passed ;

When the shingle-roof rang sharp with the rains,

I heard how he vowed it fast :

While others shook he smiled in the hut,

As he carved me a bowl of the cocoa-nut

Through the roar of the hurricanes.

## XII.

I sang his name instead of a song,  
Over and over I sang his name,  
Upward and downward I drew it along  
My various notes,—the same, the same !  
I sang it low, that the slave-girls near  
Might never guess from aught they could hear,  
It was only a name—a name.

## XIII.

I look on the sky and the sea.  
We were two to love, and two to pray,  
Yes, two, O God, who cried to Thee,  
Though nothing didst Thou say !  
Coldly Thou sat'st behind the sun :  
And now I cry who am but one,  
Thou wilt not speak to-day.

## XIV.

We were black, we were black,  
We had no claim to love and bliss,  
What marvel if each went to wrack ?  
They wrung my cold hands out of his,  
They dragged him—where ? I crawled to touch  
His blood's mark in the dust . . not much,  
Ye pilgrim-souls, though plain as *this* !

## XV.

Wrong, followed by a deeper wrong!  
Mere grief's too good for such as I:  
So the white men brought the shame ere long  
To strangle the sob of my agony.  
They would not leave me for my dull  
Wet eyes!—it was too merciful  
To let me weep pure tears and die.

## XVI.

I am black, I am black!  
I wore a child upon my breast,  
An amulet that hung too slack,  
And, in my unrest, could not rest:  
Thus we went moaning, child and mother,  
One to another, one to another,  
Until all ended for the best.

## XVII.

For hark! I will tell you low, low,  
I am black, you see,—  
And the babe who lay on my bosom so,  
Was far too white, too white for me;  
As white as the ladies who scorned to pray  
Beside me at church but yesterday,  
Though my tears had washed a place for my knee.



## XVIII.

My own, own child ! I could not bear  
To look in his face, it was so white ;  
I covered him up with a kerchief there,  
I covered his face in close and tight :  
And he moaned and struggled, as well might be,  
For the white child wanted his liberty—  
Ha, ha ! he wanted the master-right.

## XIX.

He moaned and beat with his head and feet,  
His little feet that never grew ;  
He struck them out, as it was meet,  
Against my heart to break it through :  
I might have sung and made him mild,  
But I dared not sing to the white-faced child  
The only song I knew.

## XX.

I pulled the kerchief very close :  
He could not see the sun, I swear,  
More, then, alive, than now he does  
From between the roots of the mango . . . where ?  
I know where. Close ! A child and mother  
Do wrong to look at one another,  
When one is black and one is fair.

## XXI.

Why, in that single glance I had  
Of my child's face, . . I tell you all,  
I saw a look that made me mad!  
The *master's* look, that used to fall  
On my soul like his lash . . or worse!  
And so, to save it from my curse,  
I twisted it round in my shawl.

## XXII.

And he moaned and trembled from foot to head,  
He shivered from head to foot;  
Till after a time, he lay instead  
Too suddenly still and mute.  
I felt, beside, a stiffening cold  
I dared to lift up just a fold,  
As in lifting a leaf of the mango-fruit.

## XXIII.

But *my* fruit . . . ha, ha!—there, had been  
(I laugh to think on't at this hour!)  
Your fine white angels (who have seen  
Nearest the secret of God's power)  
And plucked my fruit to make them wine,  
And sucked the soul of that child of mine  
As the humming-bird sucks the soul of the flower.

## XXIV.

Ha, ha, the trick of the angels white !  
They freed the white child's spirit so.  
I said not a word, but day and night  
I carried the body to and fro,  
And it lay on my heart like a stone, as chill.  
—The sun may shine out as much as he will :  
I am cold, though it happened a month ago.

## XXV.

From the white man's house, and the black man's hut,  
I carried the little body on ;  
The forest's arms did round us shut,  
And silence through the trees did run :  
They asked no question as I went,  
They stood too high for astonishment,  
They could see God sit on his throne.

## XXVI.

My little body, kerchiefed fast,  
I bore it on through the forest, on ;  
And when I felt it was tired at last,  
I scooped a hole beneath the moon :  
Through the forest-tops the angels far,  
With a white sharp finger from every star,  
Did point and mock at what was done.

## XXVII.

Yet when it was all done aright,—  
Earth, 'twixt me and my baby, strewed,—  
All, changed to black earth,—nothing white,—  
A dark child in the dark!—enslaved  
Some comfort, and my heart grew young;  
I sate down smiling there and sung  
The song I learnt in my maidenhood.

## XXVIII.

And thus we two were reconciled,  
The white child and black mother, thus;  
For as I sang it soft and wild,  
The same song, more melodious,  
Rose from the grave whereon I sate:  
It was the dead child singing that,  
To join the souls of both of us.

## XXIX.

I look on the sea and the sky.  
Where the pilgrims' ships first anchored lay  
The free sun rideth gloriously,  
But the pilgrim-ghosts have slid away  
Through the earliest streaks of the morn:  
My face is black, but it glares with a scorn  
Which they dare not meet by day.

## XXX.

Ha!—in their stead, their hunter sons!

Ha, ha! they are on me—they hunt in a ring!  
Keep off! I brave you all at once,

I throw off your eyes like snakes that sting!  
You have killed the black eagle at nest, I think:  
Did you ever stand still in your triumph, and shrink  
From the stroke of her wounded wing?

## XXXI.

(Man, drop that stone you dared to lift!—)

I wish you who stand there five abreast.  
Each, for his own wife's joy and gift,  
A little corpse as safely at rest  
As mine in the mangos! Yes, but *she*  
May keep live babies on her knee,  
And sing the song she likes the best.

## XXXII.

I am not mad: I am black.

I see you staring in my face—  
I know you staring, shrinking back,  
Ye are born of the Washington-race,  
And this land is the free America,  
And this mark on my wrist—(I prove what I say)  
Ropes tied me up here to the flogging-place.

## XXXIII.

You think I shrieked then? Not a sound!

I hung, as a gourd hangs in the sun;  
I only cursed them all around

As softly as I might have done  
My very own child: from these sands  
Up to the mountains, lift your hands,  
O slaves, and end what I begun!

## XXXIV.

Whips, curses; these must answer those!

For in this UNION, you have set  
Two kinds of men in adverse rows,  
Each loathing each; and all forget  
The seven wounds in Christ's body fair,  
While HE sees gaping everywhere  
Our countless wounds that pay no debt.

## XXXV.

Our wounds are different. Your white men

Are, after all, not gods indeed,  
Nor able to make Christs again  
Do good with bleeding. *We* who bleed  
(Stand off!) we help not in our loss!  
*We* are too heavy for our cross,  
And fall and crush you and your seed.

## XXXVI.

I fall, I swoon! I look at the sky.

The clouds are breaking on my brain.

I am floated along, as if I should die

Of liberty's exquisite pain.

In the name of the white child waiting for me

In the death-dark where we may kiss and agree,

White men, I leave you all curse-free

In my broken heart's disdain!

## THE CRY OF THE CHILDREN.



“Φεῦ, φεῦ, τί προσδερκεσθε μ’ ὀμμασιν, τέκνα;”—MEDEA.

### I.

Do ye hear the children weeping, O my brothers,  
Ere the sorrow comes with years?  
They are leaning their young heads against their  
mothers,  
And *that* cannot stop their tears.  
The young lambs are bleating in the meadows,  
The young birds are chirping in the nest,  
The young fawns are playing with the shadows,  
The young flowers are blowing toward the west—  
But the young, young children, O my brothers,  
They are weeping bitterly!  
They are weeping in the playtime of the others,  
In the country of the free.

### II.

Do you question the young children in the sorrow  
Why their tears are falling so?



The old man may weep for his to-morrow  
Which is lost in Long Ago ;  
The old tree is leafless in the forest,  
The old year is ending in the frost,  
The old wound, if stricken, is the sorest,  
The old hope is hardest to be lost :  
But the young, young children, O my brothers,  
Do you ask them why they stand  
Weeping sore before the bosoms of their mothers,  
In our happy Fatherland ?

## III.

They look up with their pale and sunken faces,  
And their looks are sad to see,  
For the man's hoary anguish draws and presses  
Down the cheeks of infancy ;  
' Your old earth,' they say, ' is very dreary,  
' Our young feet,' they say, ' are very weak ;  
' Few paces have we taken, yet are weary—  
Our grave-rest is very far to seek :  
Ask the aged why they weep, and not the children,  
For the outside earth is cold,  
And we young ones stand without, in our bewildering,  
And the graves are for the old.'

## IV.

True,' say the children, ' it may happen  
That we die before our time :  
Little Alice died last year, her grave is shapen

Like a snowball, in the rime.  
We looked into the pit prepared to take her :  
Was no room for any work in the close clay !  
From the sleep wherein she lieth none will wake her,  
Crying, ' Get up, little Alice ! it is day.'  
If you listen by that grave, in sun and shower,  
With your ear down, little Alice never cries ;  
Could we see her face, be sure we should not know  
her,  
For the smile has time for growing in her eyes :  
And merry go her moments, lulled and stilled in  
The shroud by the kirk-chime.  
' It is good when it happens,' say the children,  
' That we die before our time.'

## v.

Alas, alas, the children ! they are seeking  
Death in life, as best to have :  
They are binding up their hearts away from breaking,  
With a cerement from the grave.  
Go out, children, from the mine and from the city,  
Sing out, children, as the little thrushes do ;  
Pluck your handfuls of the meadow-cowslips pretty,  
Laugh aloud, to feel your fingers let them through !  
But they answer, ' Are your cowslips of the meadows  
Like our weeds anear the mine ?  
Leave us quiet in the dark of the coal-shadows,  
From your pleasures fair and fine !

## VI.

‘For oh,’ say the children, ‘we are weary,  
And we cannot run or leap ;  
If we cared for any meadows, it were merely  
To drop down in them and sleep.  
Our knees tremble sorely in the stooping,  
We fall upon our faces, trying to go ;  
And, underneath our heavy eyelids drooping,  
The reddest flower would look as pale as snow.  
For, all day, we drag our burden tiring  
Through the coal-dark, underground ;  
Or, all day, we drive the wheels of iron  
In the factories, round and round.

## VII.

‘For all day, the wheels are droning, turning ;  
Their wind comes in our faces,  
Till our hearts turn, our heads with pulses burning,  
And the walls turn in their places :  
Turns the sky in the high window blank and reeling,  
Turns the long light that drops adown the wall,  
Turn the black flies that crawl along the ceiling,  
All are turning, all the day, and we with all.  
And all day, the iron wheels are droning,  
And sometimes we could pray,  
‘O ye wheels,’ (breaking out in a mad moaning)  
‘Stop ! be silent for to-day !’

## VIII.

Ay, be silent! Let them hear each other breathing  
For a moment, mouth to mouth!  
Let them touch each other's hands, in a fresh wreathing  
Of their tender human youth!  
Let them feel that this cold metallic motion  
Is not all the life God fashions or reveals:  
Let them prove their living souls against the notion  
That they live in you, or under you, O wheels!  
Still, all day, the iron wheels go onward,  
Grinding life down from its mark;  
And the children's souls, which God is calling sunward,  
Spin on blindly in the dark.

## IX.

Now tell the poor young children, O my brothers,  
To look up to Him and pray;  
So the blessed One who blesseth all the others,  
Will bless them another day.  
They answer, 'Who is God that He should hear us,  
While the rushing of the iron wheels is stirred?  
When we sob aloud, the human creatures near us  
Pass by, hearing not, or answer not a word.  
And *we* hear not (for the wheels in their resounding)  
Strangers speaking at the door:  
Is it likely God, with angels singing round him,  
Hears our weeping any more?

## X.

‘Two words, indeed, of praying we remember,  
And at midnight’s hour of harm,  
‘Our Father,’ looking upward in the chamber,  
We say softly for a charm.\*  
We know no other words except ‘Our Father,’  
And we think that, in some pause of angels’ song,  
God may pluck them with the silence sweet to gather,  
And hold both within His right hand which is strong.  
‘Our Father!’ If He heard us, He would surely  
(For they call Him good and mild)  
Answer, smiling down the steep world very purely,  
‘Come and rest with me, my child.’

## XI.

‘But, no!’ say the children, weeping faster,  
‘He is speechless as a stone :  
And they tell us, of His image is the master  
Who commands us to work on.  
Go to!’ say the children,—‘up in Heaven,  
Dark, wheel-like, turning clouds are all we find.  
Do not mock us ; grief has made us unbelieving :

\* A fact rendered pathetically historical by Mr. Horne’s report of his commission. The name of the poet of “Orion” and “Cosmo de’ Medici” has, however, a change of associations, and comes in time to remind me that we have some noble poetic heat of literature still,—however open to the reproach of being somewhat gelid in our humanity.—1844.

We look up for God, but tears have made us blind.  
Do you hear the children weeping and disproving,  
    O my brothers, what ye preach?  
For God's possible is taught by His world's loving,  
    And the children doubt of each.

## XII.

And well may the children weep before you!  
    They are weary ere they run;  
They have never seen the sunshine, nor the glory  
    Which is brighter than the sun.  
They know the grief of man, without its wisdom;  
    They sink in man's despair, without its calm;  
Are slaves, without the liberty in Christdom,  
    Are martyrs, by the pang without the palm:  
Are worn as if with age, yet unretrievingly  
    The harvest of its memories cannot reap,—  
Are orphans of the earthly love and heavenly.  
    Let them weep! let them weep!

## XIII.

They look up with their pale and sunken faces,  
    And their look is dread to see,  
For they mind you of their angels in high places,  
    With eyes turned on Deity.  
'How long,' they say, 'how long, O cruel nation,  
    Will you stand, to move the world, on a child's heart,—

Stifle down with a mailed heel its palpitantion,  
And tread onward to your throne amid the mart?  
Our blood splashes upward, O gold-heaper,  
And your purple shows your path!  
But the child's sob in the silence curses deeper  
Than the strong man in his wrath.'

## A CHILD ASLEEP.



### I.

How he sleepeth, having drunken  
Weary childhood's mandragore !  
From its pretty eyes have sunken  
Pleasures to make room for more ;  
Sleeping near the withered nosegay which he pulled  
the day before.

### II.

Nosegays ! leave them for the waking ;  
Throw them earthward where they grew ;  
Dim are such beside the breaking  
Amaranths he looks unto :  
Folded eyes see brighter colours than the open ever do.

### III.

Heaven-flowers, rayed by shadows golden  
From the palms they sprang beneath,  
Now perhaps divinely holden,  
Swing against him in a wreath :  
We may think so from the quickening of his bloom  
and of his breath.



## IV.

Vision unto vision calleth

While the young child dreameth on :

Fair, O dreamer, thee befalleth

With the glory thou hast won !

Darker wast thou in the garden yestermorn by summer sun.

## V.

We should see the spirits ringing

Round thee, were the clouds away :

'Tis the child-heart draws them, singing

In the silent-seeming clay—

Singing! stars that seem the mutest go in music all the way.

## VI.

As the moths around a taper,

As the bees around a rose,

As the gnats around a vapour,

So the spirits group and close

Round about a holy childhood as if drinking its repose.

## VII.

Shapes of brightness overlean thee,

Flash their diadems of youth

On the ringlets which half screen thee,

While thou smilest . . not in sooth

*Thy* smile, but the overfair one, dropt from some ætherial mouth.

## VIII.

Haply it is angels' duty,  
During slumber, shade by shade  
To fine down this childish beauty  
To the thing it must be made  
Ere the world shall bring it praises, or the tomb shall  
see it fade.

## IX.

Softly, softly ! make no noises !  
Now he lieth dead and dumb ;  
Now he hears the angels' voices  
Folding silence in the room :  
Now he muses deep the meaning of the Heaven-words  
as they come.

## X.

Speak not ! he is consecrated ;  
Breathe no breath across his eyes :  
Lifted up and separated  
On the hand of God he lies  
In a sweetness beyond touching, held in cloistral  
sanctities.

## XI.

Could ye bless him, father—mother,  
Bless the dimple in his cheek ?  
Dare ye look at one another  
And the benediction speak ?  
Would ye not break out in weeping and confess your-  
selves too weak ?

## XII.

He is harmless, ye are sinful ;

Ye are troubled, he, at ease :

From his slumber, virtue winful

Floweth outward with increase.

Dare not bless him ! but be bless'd by his peace, and  
go in peace.

## THE FOURFOLD ASPECT.



### I.

WHEN ye stood up in the house  
With your little childish feet,  
And, in touching Life's first shows,  
First the touch of Love did meet,—  
Love and Nearness seeming one,  
By the heartlight cast before,  
And of all Beloveds, none  
Standing farther than the door;  
Not a name being dear to thought,  
With its owner beyond call;  
Not a face, unless it brought  
Its own shadow to the wall;  
When the worst recorded change  
Was of apple dropt from bough,  
When love's sorrow seemed more strange  
Than love's treason can seem now ;—  
Then, the Loving took you up  
Soft, upon their elder knees,  
Telling why the statues droop

Underneath the churchyard trees,  
And how ye must lie beneath them  
Through the winters long and deep,  
Till the last trump overbreathe them,  
And ye smile out of your sleep.  
Oh, ye lifted up your head, and it seemed as if they said  
A tale of fairy ships  
With a swan-wing for a sail;  
Oh, ye kissed their loving lips  
For the merry, merry tale—  
So carelessly ye thought upon the Dead !

## II.

Soon ye read in solemn stories  
Of the men of long ago,  
Of the pale bewildering glories  
Shining farther than we know ;  
Of the heroes with the laurel,  
Of the poets with the bay,  
Of the two worlds' earnest quarrel  
For that beauteous Helena ;  
How Achilles at the portal  
Of the tent heard footsteps nigh,  
And his strong heart, half-immortal,  
Met the *keitai* with a cry ;  
How Ulysses left the sunlight  
For the pale eidola race  
Blank and passive through the dun light,  
Staring blindly in his face ;

How that true wife said to Pœtus,  
With calm smile and wounded heart,  
‘Sweet, it hurts not!’ How Admetus  
Saw his blessed one depart;  
How King Arthur proved his mission,  
And Sir Roland wound his horn,  
And at Sangreal’s moony vision  
Swords did bristle round like corn.  
Oh, ye lifted up your head, and it seemed, the while ye  
read,  
That this Death, then, must be found  
A Valhalla for the crowned,  
The heroic who prevail :  
None, be sure can enter in  
Far below a paladin  
Of a noble, noble tale—  
So awfully ye thought upon the Dead !

## III.

Ay, but soon ye woke up shrieking,  
As a child that wakes at night  
From a dream of sisters speaking  
In a garden’s summer-light,—  
That wakes, starting up and bounding,  
In a lonely, lonely bed,  
With a wall of darkness round him,  
Stifling black about his head !  
And the full sense of your mortal  
Rushed upon you deep and loud,

And ye heard the thunder hurtle  
From the silence of the cloud.  
Funeral-torches at your gateway  
Threw a dreadful light within.  
All things changed : you rose up straightway,  
And saluted Death and Sin.  
Since, your outward man has rallied,  
And your eye and voice grown bold ;  
Yet the Sphinx of Life stands pallid,  
With her saddest secret told.  
Happy places have grown holy :  
If ye went where once ye went,  
Only tears would fall down slowly,  
As at solemn sacrament.  
Merry books, once read for pastime,  
If ye dared to read again,  
Only memories of the last time  
Would swim darkly up the brain.  
Household names, which used to flutter  
Through your laughter unawares,—  
God's Divinest ye could utter  
With less trembling in your prayers.  
Ye have dropt adown your head, and it seems as if ye  
tread  
On your own hearts in the path  
Ye are called to in His wrath,  
And your prayers go up in wail  
—' Dost Thou see, then, all our loss,  
O Thou agonized on cross ?

Art thou reading all its tale ?'  
So mournfully ye think upon the Dead !

## IV.

Pray, pray, thou who also weepest,  
And the drops will slacken so.  
Weep, weep, and the watch thou keepest,  
With a quicker count will go.  
Think : the shadow on the dial  
For the nature most undone,  
Marks the passing of the trial,  
Proves the presence of the sun.  
Look, look up, in starry passion,  
To the throne above the spheres :  
Learn : the spirit's gravitation  
Still must differ from the tear's.  
Hope : with all the strength thou usest  
In embracing thy despair.  
Love : the earthly love thou lovest  
Shall return to thee more fair.  
Work : make clear the forest-tangles  
Of the wildest stranger-land.  
Trust : the blessèd deathly angels  
Whisper, ' Sabbath hours at hand !'  
By the heart's wound when most gory,  
By the longest agony,  
Smile !—Behold in sudden glory  
The TRANSFIGURED smiles on *thee* !



And ye lifted up your head, and it seemed as if He said,  
‘My Belovēd, is it so?  
Have ye tasted of my woe?  
Of my Heaven ye shall not fail!’  
He stands brightly where the shade is,  
With the keys of Death and Hades,  
And there, ends the mournful tale—  
So hopefully ye think upon the Dead!

## NIGHT AND THE MERRY MAN.

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### NIGHT.

'NEATH my moon what doest thou,  
With a somewhat paler brow  
Than she giveth to the ocean?  
He, without a pulse or motion,  
Muttering low before her stands,  
Lifting his invoking hands  
Like a seer before a sprite,  
To catch her oracles of light:  
But thy soul out-trembles now  
Many pulses on thy brow.  
Where be all thy laughs clear,  
Others laughed alone to hear?  
Where thy quaint jests, said for fame?  
Where thy dances, mixed with game?  
Where thy festive companies,  
Moonëd o'er with ladies' eyes  
All more bright for thee, I trow?  
'Neath my moon what doest thou?

## THE MERRY MAN.

I AM digging my warm heart  
Till I find its coldest part;  
I am digging wide and low,  
Further than a spade will go,  
Till that, when the pit is deep  
And large enough, I there may heap  
All my present pain and past  
Joy, dead things that look aghast  
By the daylight: now 'tis done.  
Throw them in, by one and one!  
I must laugh, at rising sun.

Memories—of fancy's golden  
Treasures which my hands have holden,  
Till the chillness made them ache;  
Of childhood's hopes that used to wake  
If birds were in a singing strain,  
And for less cause, sleep again;  
Of the moss-seat in the wood  
Where I trysted solitude;  
Of the hill-top where the wind  
Used to follow me behind,  
Then in sudden rush to blind  
Both my glad eyes with my hair,  
Taken gladly in the snare;

Of the climbing up the rocks,  
Of the playing 'neath the oaks  
Which retain beneath them now  
Only shadow of the bough ;  
Of the lying on the grass  
While the clouds did overpass,  
Only they, so lightly driven,  
Seeming betwixt me and Heaven ;  
Of the little prayers serene,  
Murmuring of earth and sin ;  
Of large-leaved philosophy  
Leaning from my childish knee ;  
Of poetic book sublime,  
Soul-kissed for the first dear time,  
Greek or English, ere I knew  
Life was not a poem too :—  
Throw them in, by one and one !  
I must laugh, at rising sun.

—Of the glorious ambitions  
Yet unquenched by their fruitions ;  
Of the reading out the nights ;  
Of the straining at mad heights ;  
Of achievements, less descried  
By a dear few than magnified ;  
Of praises from the many earned  
When praise from love was undiscerned ;  
Of the sweet reflecting gladness  
Softened by itself to sadness :—

Throw them in, by one and one !  
I must laugh, at rising sun.

What are these ? more, more than these !  
Throw in dearer memories !—  
Of voices whereof but to speak  
Makes mine own all sunk and weak ;  
Of smiles the thought of which is sweeping  
All my soul to floods of weeping ;  
Of looks whose absence fain would weigh  
My looks to the ground for aye ;  
Of clasping hands—ah me, I wring  
Mine, and in a tremble fling  
Downward, downward all this paining !  
Partings with the sting remaining,  
Meetings with a deeper throe  
Since the joy is ruined so,  
Changes with a fiery burning,  
(Shadows upon all the turning,)  
Thoughts of . . with a storm they came,  
*Them* I have not breath to name :  
Downward, downward be they cast  
In the pit ! and now at last  
My work beneath the moon is done,  
And I shall laugh, at rising sun.

But let me pause or ere I cover  
All my treasures darkly over :

I will speak not in thine ears,  
Only tell my beaded tears  
Silently, most silently.  
When the last is calmly told,  
Let that same moist rosary  
With the rest sepúlchred be,  
Finished now ! The darksome mould  
Sealeth up the darksome pit.  
I will lay no stone on it,  
Grasses I will sow instead,  
Fit for Queen Titania's tread ;  
Flowers, encoloured with the sun,  
And *at at* written upon none ;  
Thus, whenever saileth by  
The Lady World of dainty eye,  
Not a grief shall here remain,  
Silken shoon to damp or stain :  
And while she lisps, ' I have not seen  
Any place more smooth and clean ' .  
Here she cometh !—Ha, ha !—who  
Laughs as loud as I can do ?

## EARTH AND HER PRAISERS.



### I.

THE Earth is old ;  
Six thousand winters make her heart a-cold :  
The sceptre slanteth from her palsied hold.  
She saith, ' 'Las me ! God's word that I was 'good'  
Is taken back to heaven,  
From whence when any sound comes, I am riven  
By some sharp bolt ; and now no angel would  
Descend with sweet dew-silence on my mountains,  
To glorify the lovely river fountains  
That gush along their side :  
I see, O weary change ! I see instead  
This human wrath and pride,  
These thrones and tombs, judicial wrong and blood,  
And bitter words are poured upon mine head—  
' O Earth ! thou art a stage for tricks unholy,  
A church for most remorseful melancholy ;  
Thou art so spoilt, we should forget we had  
An Eden in thee, wert thou not so sad !'  
Sweet children, I am old ! ye, every one,  
Do keep me from a portion of my sun :

Give praise in change for brightness !  
That I may shake my hills in infiniteness  
Of breezy laughter, as in youthful mirth,  
To hear Earth's sons and daughters praising Earth.'

## II.

Whereupon a child began,  
With spirit running up to man  
As by angel's shining ladder,  
(May he find no cloud above !)  
Seeming he had ne'er been sadder  
All his days than now,  
Sitting in the chestnut grove,  
With that joyous overflow  
Of smiling from his mouth o'er brow  
And cheek and chin, as if the breeze  
Leaning tricky from the trees  
To part his golden hairs, had blown  
Into an hundred smiles that one.

## III.

'O rare, rare Earth !' he saith,  
'I will praise thee presently ;  
Not to-day ; I have no breath :  
I have hunted squirrels three—  
Two ran down in the furzy hollow  
Where I could not see nor follow,  
One sits at the top of the filbert-tree,  
With a yellow nut and a mock at me :



Presently it shall be done !  
When I see which way these two have run,  
When the mocking one at the filbert-top  
Shall leap a-down and beside me stop,  
Then, rare Earth, rare Earth,  
Will I pause, having known thy worth,  
To say all good of thee !'

## IV.

Next a lover,—with a dream  
'Neath his waking eyelids hidden,  
And a frequent sigh unbidden,  
And an idlesse all the day  
Beside a wandering stream,  
And a silence that is made  
Of a word he dares not say,—  
Shakes slow his pensive head :  
'Earth, Earth !' saith he,  
'If spirits, like thy roses, grew  
On one stalk, and winds austere  
Could but only blow them near,  
To share each other's dew ;—  
If, when summer rains agree  
To beautify thy hills, I knew  
Looking off them I might see  
Some one very beauteous too,—  
Then Earth,' saith he,  
'I would praise . . . nay, nay—not *thee* !'

## V.

Will the pedant name her next?  
Crabbed with a crabbed text  
Sits he in his study nook,  
With his elbow on a book,  
And with stately crossèd knees,  
And a wrinkle deeply thrird  
Through his lowering brow,  
Caused by making proofs enow  
That Plato in 'Parmenides'  
Meant the same Spinoza did,—  
Or, that an hundred of the groping  
Like himself, had made one Homer,  
*Homer* being a misnomer.  
What hath *he* to do with praise  
Of Earth or aught? Whene'er the sloping  
Sunbeams through his window daze  
His eyes off from the learned phrase,  
Straightway he draws close the curtain.  
May abstraction keep him dumb!  
Were his lips to ope, 'tis certain  
'Derivatum est' would come.

## VI.

Then a mourner moveth pale  
In a silence full of wail,  
Raising not his sunken head  
Because he wandered last that way  
With that one beneath the clay:

Weeping not, because that one,  
The only one who would have said,  
'Cease to weep, beloved!' has gone  
Whence returneth comfort none.  
The silence breaketh suddenly,—  
'Earth, I praise thee!' crieth he,  
'Thou hast a grave for also *me*.'

## VII.

Ha, a poet! know him by  
The ecstasy-dilated eye,  
Not uncharged with tears that ran  
Upward from his heart of man;  
By the cheek, from hour to hour,  
Kindled bright or sunken wan  
With a sense of lonely power;  
By the brow uplifted higher  
Than others, for more low declining:  
By the lip which words of fire  
Overboiling have burned white  
While they gave the nations light:  
Ay, in every time and place  
Ye may know the poet's face  
By the shade or shining.

## VIII.

'Neath a golden cloud he stands,  
Spreading his impassioned hands.  
'O God's Earth!' he saith, 'the sign  
From the Father-soul to mine

Of all beauteous mysteries,  
Of all perfect images  
Which, divine in His divine,  
In my human only are  
Very excellent and fair!  
Think not, Earth, that I would raise  
Weary forehead in thy praise,  
(Weary, that I cannot go  
Farther from thy region low,)  
If were struck no richer meanings  
From thee than thyself. The leanings  
Of the close trees o'er the brim  
Of a sunshine-haunted stream  
Have a sound beneath their leaves,  
    Not of wind, not of wind,  
Which the poet's voice achieves:  
The faint mountains, heaped behind,  
Have a falling on their tops,  
    Not of dew, not of dew,  
Which the poet's fancy drops:  
Viewless things his eyes can view,  
Driftings of his dream do light  
All the skies by day and night,  
And the seas that deepest roll,  
Carry murmurs of his soul.  
Earth, I praise thee! praise thou *me*!  
God perfecteth his creation  
With this recipient poet-passion,  
And makes the beautiful to be.

I praise thee, O belov'd sign,  
From the God-soul unto mine !  
Praise me, that I cast on thee  
The cunning sweet interpretation,  
The help and glory and dilation  
Of mine immortality !'

## IX.

There was silence. None did dare  
To use again the spoken air  
Of that far-charming voice, until  
A Christian resting on the hill,  
With a thoughtful smile subdued  
(Seeming learnt in solitude)  
Which a weeper might have viewed  
Without new tears, did softly say,  
And looked up unto heaven away  
While he praised the Earth—  
‘ O Earth,

I count the praises thou art worth,  
By thy waves that move aloud,  
By thy hills against the cloud,  
By thy valleys warm and green,  
By the copses' elms between,  
By their birds which, like a sprite  
Scattered by a strong delight  
Into fragments musical,  
Stir and sing in every bush ;  
By thy silver founts that fall,

As if to entice the stars at night  
 To thine heart ; by grass and rush,  
 And little weeds the children pull,  
 Mistook for flowers !

—Oh, beautiful

Art thou, Earth, albeit worse  
 Than in heaven is call'd good !  
 Good to us, that we may know  
 Meekly from thy good to go ;  
 While the holy, crying Blood  
 Puts its music kind and low  
 'Twixt such ears as are not dull,  
 And thine ancient curse !

x.

' Prais'd be the mosses soft  
 In thy forest pathways oft,  
 And the thorns, which make us think  
 Of the thornless river-brink

Where the ransomed tread :

Prais'd be thy sunny gleams,  
 And the storm, that worketh dreams  
 Of calm unfinished :

Prais'd be thine active days,  
 And thy night-time's solemn need,  
 When in God's dear book we read

*No night shall be therein :*

Prais'd be thy dwellings warm  
 By household faggot's cheerful blaze,

Where, to hear of pardoned sin,  
Pauseth oft the merry din,  
Save the babe's upon the arm  
Who croweth to the crackling wood :  
Yea, and, better understood,  
Prais'd be thy dwellings cold,  
Hid beneath the churchyard mould,  
Where the bodies of the saints  
Separate from earthly taints  
Lie asleep, in blessing bound,  
Waiting for the trumpet's sound  
To free them into blessing ;—none  
Weeping more beneath the sun,  
Though dangerous words of human love  
Be graven very near, above.

## XI.

' Earth, we Christians praise thee thus,  
Even for the change that comes  
With a grief from thee to us :  
For thy cradles and thy tombs,  
For the pleasant corn and wine  
And summer-heat ; and also for  
The frost upon the sycamore  
And hail upon the vine !'

## THE VIRGIN MARY TO THE CHILD JESUS.

---

But see the Virgin blest  
Hath laid her babe to rest.

MILTON'S *Hymn on the Nativity*.

### I.

SLEEP, sleep, mine Holy One!  
My flesh, my Lord!—what name? I do not know  
A name that seemeth not too high or low,  
Too far from me or heaven:  
My Jesus, *that* is best! that word being given  
By the majestic angel whose command  
Was softly as a man's beseeching said,  
When I and all the earth appeared to stand  
In the great overflow  
Of light celestial from his wings and head.  
Sleep, sleep, my saving One!

### II.

And art Thou come for saving, baby-browed  
And speechless Being—art Thou come for saving?  
The palm that grows beside our door is bowed



By treadings of the low wind from the south,  
 A restless shadow through the chamber waving :  
 Upon its bough a bird sings in the sun,  
 But Thou, with that close slumber on Thy mouth,  
 Dost seem of wind and sun already weary.  
 Art come for saving, O my weary One ?

## III.

Perchance this sleep that shutteth out the dreary  
 Earth-sounds and motions, opens on Thy soul  
     High dreams on fire with God ;  
 High songs that make the pathways where they roll  
 More bright than stars do theirs ; and visions new  
 Of Thine eternal Nature's old abode.

    Suffer this mother's kiss,  
     Best thing that earthly is,  
 To glide the music and the glory through,  
 Nor narrow in Thy dream the broad upliftings  
     Of any seraph wing.  
 Thus noiseless, thus. Sleep, sleep, my dreaming One !

## IV.

The slumber of His lips meseems to run  
 Through *my* lips to mine heart, to all its shiftings  
 Of sensual life, bringing contrariousness  
 In a great calm. I feel I could lie down  
 As Moses did, and die,\*—and then live most.

\* It is a Jewish tradition that Moses died of the kisses of God's lips.

I am 'ware of you, heavenly Presences,  
 That stand with your peculiar light unlost,  
 Each forehead with a high thought for a crown,  
 Unsunned i' the sunshine! I am 'ware. Ye throw  
 No shade against the wall! How motionless  
 Ye round me with your living statuary,  
 While through your whiteness, in and outwardly,  
 Continual thoughts of God appear to go,  
 Like light's soul in itself. I bear, I bear  
 To look upon the dropt lids of your eyes,  
 Though their external shining testifies  
 To that beatitude within which were  
 Enough to blast an eagle at his sun:  
 I fall not on my sad clay face before ye,—  
     I look on His. I know  
 My spirit which dilateth with the woe  
     Of His mortality,  
     May well contain your glory.  
     Yea, drop your lids more low.  
 Ye are but fellow-worshippers with me!  
     Sleep, sleep, my worshipped One!

## v.

We sate among the stalls at Bethlehem;  
 The dumb kine from their fodder turning them,  
     Softened their horned faces  
     To almost human gazes  
     Toward the newly Born:  
 The simple shepherds from the star-lit brooks

Brought visionary looks,  
 As yet in their astonished hearing rung  
     The strange sweet angel-tongue :  
 The magi of the East, in sandals worn,  
     Knelt reverent, sweeping round,  
 With long pale beards, their gifts upon the ground,  
     The incense, myrrh and gold  
 These baby hands were impotent to hold :  
 So let all earthlies and celestials wait  
     Upon Thy royal state.  
 Sleep, sleep, my kingly One !

## VI.

I am not proud—meek angels, ye invest  
 New meeknesses to hear such utterance rest  
 On mortal lips,—‘I am not proud’—*not proud !*  
 Albeit in my flesh God sent His Son,  
 Albeit over Him my head is bowed  
 As others bow before Him, still mine heart  
 Bows lower than their knees. O centuries  
 That roll in vision your futurities  
     My future grave athwart,—  
 Whose murmurs seem to reach me while I keep  
     Watch o’er this sleep,—  
 Say of me as the Heavenly said—‘Thou art  
 The blesseddest of women!’—blessedest,  
 Not holiest, not noblest, no high name  
 Whose height misplaced may pierce me like a shame  
 When I sit meek in heaven !

For me, for me,  
 God knows that I am feeble like the rest !  
 I often wandered forth, more child than maiden  
 Among the midnight hills of Galilee

Whose summits looked heaven-laden,  
 Listening to silence as it seemed to be  
 God's voice, so soft yet strong, so fain to press  
 Upon my heart as heaven did on the height,  
 And waken up its shadows by a light,  
 And show its vileness by a holiness.

Then I knelt down most silent like the night,

Too self-renounced for fears,  
 Raising my small face to the boundless blue  
 Whose stars did mix and tremble in my tears :  
 God heard *them* falling after, with his dew.

## VII.

So, seeing my corruption, can I see  
 This Incorruptible now born of me,  
 This fair new Innocence no sun did chance  
 To shine on, (for even Adam was no child)  
 Created from my nature all defiled,  
 This mystery, from out mine ignorance,—  
 Nor feel the blindness, stain, corruption, more  
 Than others do, or *I* did heretofore ?  
 Can hands wherein such burden pure has been,  
 Not open with the cry 'unclean, unclean,'  
 More oft than any else beneath the skies ?

Ah King, ah Christ, ah son !

The kine, the shepherds, the abasèd wise  
 Must all less lowly wait  
 Than I, upon Thy state.  
 Sleep, sleep, my kingly One!

## VIII.

Art Thou a King, then? Come, His universe,  
 Come, crown me Him a King!  
 Pluck rays from all such stars as never fling  
 Their light where fell a curse,  
 And make a crowning for this kingly brow!—  
 What is my word? Each empyreal star  
 Sits in a sphere afar  
 In shining ambuscade:  
 The child-brow, crowned by none,  
 Keeps its unchildlike shade.  
 Sleep, sleep, my crownless One!

## IX.

Unchildlike shade! No other babe doth wear  
 An aspect very sorrowful, as Thou.  
 No small babe-smiles my watching heart has seen  
 To float like speech the speechless lips between,  
 No dovelike cooing in the golden air,  
 No quick short joys of leaping babyhood:  
 Alas, our earthly good  
 In heaven thought evil, seems too good for Thee:  
 Yet, sleep, my weary One!

## X.

And then the drear sharp tongue of prophecy,  
 With the dread sense of things which shall be done,  
 Doth smite me inly, like a sword : a sword ?  
*That ' smites the Shepherd.* Then, I think aloud  
 The words ' despised,'—rejected,'—every word  
 Recoiling into darkness as I view  
     The DARLING on my knee.  
 Bright angels,—move not—lest ye stir the cloud  
 Betwixt my soul and His futurity !  
 I must not die, with mother's work to do,  
     And could not live—and see.

## XI.

It is enough to bear  
 This image still and fair,  
 This holier in sleep  
 Than a saint at prayer,  
 This aspect of a child  
 Who never sinned or smiled ;  
 This Presence in an infant's face ;  
 This sadness most like love,  
 This love than love more deep,  
 This weakness like omnipotence  
 It is so strong to move.  
 Awful is this watching place,  
 Awful what I see from hence—  
 A king, without regalia,  
 A God, without the thunder,

A child, without the heart for play ;  
Ay, a Creator, rent asunder  
From His first glory and cast away  
On His own world, for me alone  
To hold in hands created, crying—SON !

## XII.

That tear fell not on Thee,  
Beloved, yet thou stirrest in thy slumber !  
THOU, stirring not for glad sounds out of number  
Which through the vibratory palm-trees run  
From summer-wind and bird,  
So quickly hast thou heard  
A tear fall silently ?  
Wak'st thou, O loving One ?—

## AN ISLAND.



All gooth but Goddis will.—OLD POET.

### I.

MY dream is of an island-place  
Which distant seas keep lonely,  
A little island on whose face  
The stars are watchers only :  
Those bright still stars ! they need not seem  
Brighter or stiller in my dream.

### II.

An island full of hills and dells,  
All rumpled and uneven  
With green recesses, sudden swells,  
And odorous valleys driven  
So deep and straight that always there  
The wind is cradled to soft air.

### III.

Hills running up to heaven for light  
Through woods that half-way ran,



As if the wild earth mimicked right

The wilder heart of man :  
Only it shall be greener far  
And gladder than hearts ever are.

## IV.

More like, perhaps, that mountain piece  
Of Dante's paradise,  
Disrupt to an hundred hills like these,  
In falling from the skies ;  
Bringing within it, all the roots  
Of heavenly trees and flowers and fruits :

## V.

For saving where the grey rocks strike  
Their javelins up the azure,  
Or where deep fissures miser-like  
Hoard up some fountain treasure,  
(And e'en in them, stoop down and hear,  
Leaf sounds with water in your ear,—)

## VI.

The place is all awave with trees,  
Limes, myrtles purple-beaded,  
Acacias having drunk the lees  
Of the night-dew, faint-headed,  
And wan grey olive-woods which seem  
The fittest foliage for a dream.

## VII.

Trees, trees on all sides! they combine  
Their plummy shades to throw,  
Through whose clear fruit and blossom fine  
Whene'er the sun may go,  
The ground beneath he deeply stains,  
As passing through cathedral panes.

## VIII.

But little needs this earth of ours  
That shining from above her,  
When many Pleiades of flowers  
(Not one lost) star her over,  
The rays of their unnumbered hues  
Being all refracted by the dews.

## IX.

Wide-petalled plants that boldly drink  
The Amreeta of the sky,  
Shut bells that dull with rapture sink,  
And lolling buds, half shy;  
I cannot count them, but between  
Is room for grass and mosses green,

## X.

And brooks, that glass in different strengths  
All colours in disorder,  
Or, gathering up their silver lengths  
Beside their winding border,  
Sleep, haunted through the slumber hidden,  
By lilies white as dreams in Eden.

## XI.

Nor think each arch'd tree with each  
Too closely interlaces  
To admit of vistas out of reach,  
And broad moon-lighted places  
Upon whose sward the antlered deer  
May view their double image clear.

## XII.

For all this island 's creature-full,  
(Kept happy not by halves)  
Mild cows, that at the vine-wreaths pull  
Then low back at their calves  
With tender lowings, to approve  
The warm mouths milking them for love.

## XIII.

Free gamesome horses, antelopes,  
And harmless leaping leopards,  
And buffaloes upon the slopes,  
And sheep unrul'd by shepherds :  
Hares, lizards, hedgehogs, badgers, mice,  
Snakes, squirrels, frogs, and butterflies.

## XIV.

And birds that live there in a crowd,  
Horned owls, rapt nightingales,  
Larks bold with heaven, and peacocks proud,  
Self-sphered in those grand tails ;  
All creatures glad and safe, I deem :  
No guns nor springes in my dream !

## XV.

The island's edges are a-wing  
With trees that overbranch  
The sea with song-birds welcoming  
The curlews to green change;  
And doves from half-closed lids espy  
The red and purple fish go by.

## XVI.

One dove is answering in trust  
The water every minute,  
Thinking so soft a murmur must  
Have her mate's cooing in it:  
So softly doth earth's beauty round  
Infuse itself in ocean's sound.

## XVII.

My sanguine soul bounds forwarder  
To meet the bounding waves;  
Beside them straightway I repair,  
To live within the caves:  
And near me two or three may dwell  
Whom dreams fantastic please as well.

## XVIII.

Long winding caverns, glittering far  
Into a crystal distance!  
Through clefts of which, shall many a star  
Shine clear without resistance  
And carry down its rays the smell  
Of flowers above invisible.

## XIX.

I said that two or three might choose  
Their dwelling near mine own :  
Those who would change man's voice and use,  
For Nature's way and tone—  
Man's veering heart and careless eyes,  
For Nature's steadfast sympathies.

## XX.

Ourselves, to meet her faithfulness,  
Shall play a faithful part ;  
Her beautiful shall ne'er address  
The monstrous at our heart :  
Her musical shall ever touch  
Something within us also such.

## XXI.

Yet shall she not our mistress live,  
As doth the moon of ocean,  
Though gently as the moon she give  
Our thoughts a light and motion :  
More like a harp of many lays,  
Moving its master while he plays.

## XXII.

No sod in all that island doth  
Yawn open for the dead ;  
No wind hath borne a traitor's oath ;  
No earth, a mourner's tread ;  
We cannot say by stream or shade,  
' I suffered *here*,—was *here* betrayed.'

## XXIII.

Our only 'farewell' we shall laugh  
To shifting cloud or hour,  
And use our only epitaph  
To some bud turned a flower :  
Our only tears shall serve to prove  
Excess in pleasure or in love.

## XXIV.

Our fancies shall their plumage catch  
From fairest island-birds,  
Whose eggs let young ones out at hatch,  
Born singing ! then our words  
Unconsciously shall take the dyes  
Of those prodigious fantasies.

## XXV.

Yea, soon, no consonant unsmooth  
Our smile-tuned lips shall reach ;  
Sounds sweet as Hellas spake in youth,  
Shall glide into our speech :  
(What music, certes, can you find  
As soft as voices which are kind ?)

## XXVI.

And often, by the joy without  
And in us, overcome,  
We, through our musing, shall let float  
Such poems,—sitting dumb,—  
As Pindar might have writ if he  
Had tended sheep in Arcady ;

## XXVII.

Or Æschylus—the pleasant fields  
He died in, longer knowing ;  
Or Homer, had men's sins and shields  
Been lost in Meles flowing ;  
Or Poet Plato, had the undim  
Unsetting Godlight broke on him.

## XXVIII.

Choose me the cave most worthy choice,  
To make a place for prayer,  
And I will choose a praying voice  
To pour our spirits there :  
How silverly the echoes run !  
*Thy will be done,—thy will be done.*

## XXIX.

Gently yet strangely uttered words !  
They lift me from my dream ;  
The island fadeth with its swords  
That did no more than seem :  
The streams are dry, no sun could find—  
The fruits are fallen, without wind.

## XXX.

So oft the doing of God's will  
Our foolish wills undoeth !  
And yet what idle dream breaks ill,  
Which morning-light subdueth ?  
And who would murmur and misdoubt,  
When God's great sunrise finds him out ?

## THE SOUL'S TRAVELLING.

—◆—  
*Ἡδὴ νοεραὺς  
Πετασάι τάρσους.*

SYNEKTIUS.

### I.

I DWELL amid the city ever.  
The great humanity which beats  
Its life along the stony streets,  
Like a strong and unsunned river  
In a self-made course,  
I sit and harken while it rolls.  
Very sad and very hoarse  
Certes is the flow of souls ;  
Infinittest tendencies  
By the finite prest and pent,  
In the finite, turbulent :  
How we tremble in surprise  
When sometimes, with an awful sound,  
God's great plummet strikes the ground !



## II.

The champ of the steeds on the silver bit,  
As they whirl the rich man's carriage by ;  
The beggar's whine as he looks at it,—  
But it goes too fast for charity ;  
The trail on the street of the poor man's broom,  
That the lady who walks to her palace-home,  
On her silken skirt may catch no dust ;  
The tread of the business-men who must  
Count their per-cents by the paces they take ;  
The cry of the babe unheard of its mother  
Though it lie on her breast, while she thinks of the  
other

Laid yesterday where it will not wake ;  
The flower-girl's prayer to buy roses and pinks,  
Held out in the smoke, like stars by day ;  
The gin-door's oath that hollowly chinks  
Guilt upon grief and wrong upon hate ;  
The cabman's cry to get out of the way ;  
The dustman's call down the area-grate ;  
The young maid's jest, and the old wife's scold,  
The haggling talk of the boys at a stall,  
The fight in the street which is backed for gold,  
The plea of the lawyers in Westminster Hall ;  
The drop on the stones of the blind man's staff  
As he trades in his own grief's sacredness,  
The brothel shriek, and the Newgate laugh,  
The hum upon 'Change, and the organ's grinding,  
(The grinder's face being nevertheless

Dry and vacant of even woe  
While the children's hearts are leaping so  
At the merry music's winding ;) )  
The black-plumed funeral's creeping train  
Long and slow (and yet they will go  
As fast as Life though it hurry and strain !)  
Creeping the populous houses through  
And nodding their plumes at either side,—  
At many a house where an infant, new  
To the sunshiny world, has just struggled and cried,—  
At many a house where sitteth a bride  
Trying to-morrow's coronals  
With a scarlet blush to-day :  
    Slowly creep the funerals,  
As none should hear the noise and say,  
The living, the living must go away  
    To multiply the dead.  
Hark ! an upward shout is sent,  
In grave strong joy from tower to steeple  
    The bells ring out,  
The trumpets sound, the people shout,  
The young queen goes to her parliament ;  
She turneth round her large blue eyes  
More bright with childish memories  
Than royal hopes, upon the people ;  
On either side she bows her head  
    Lowly, with a queenly grace,  
And smile most trusting-innocent,  
As if she smiled upon her mother ;

The thousands press before each other  
To bless her to her face ;  
And booms the deep majestic voice  
Through trump and drum,—‘May the queen rejoice  
In the people’s liberties !’

## III.

I dwell amid the city,  
And hear the flow of souls in act and speech,  
For pomp or trade, for merrymake or folly :  
I hear the confluence and sum of each,  
And that is melancholy !  
Thy voice is a complaint, O crownèd city,  
The blue sky covering thee like God’s great pity.

## IV

O blue sky ! it mindeth me  
Of places where I used to see  
Its vast unbroken circle thrown  
From the far pale-peakèd hill  
Out to the last verge of ocean,  
As by God’s arm it were done  
Then for the first time, with the emotion  
Of that first impulse on it still.  
Oh, we spirits fly at will  
Faster than the wingèd steed  
Whereof in old book we read,  
With the sunlight foaming back  
From his flanks to a misty wrack,

And his nostril reddening proud  
As he breasteth the steep thundercloud,—  
Smoother than Sabrina's chair  
Gliding up from wave to air,  
While she smileth debonair  
Yet holy, coldly and yet brightly,  
Like her own mooned waters nightly,  
Through her dripping hair.

## v.

Very fast and smooth we fly,  
Spirits, though the flesh be by;  
All looks feed not from the eye  
Nor all hearings from the ear:  
We can harken and espy  
Without either, we can journey  
Bold and gay as knight to tourney,  
And, though we wear no visor down  
To dark our countenance, the foe  
Shall never chafe us as we go.

## vi.

I am gone from peopled town!  
It passeth its street-thunder round  
My body which yet hears no sound,  
For now another sound, another  
Vision, my soul's senses have—  
O'er a hundred valleys deep  
Where the hills' green shadows sleep

Scarce known because the valley-trees  
Cross those upland images,  
O'er a hundred hills each other  
Watching to the western wave,  
I have travelled,—I have found  
The silent, lone, remembered ground.

## VII.

I have found a grassy niche  
Hollowed in a seaside hill,  
As if the ocean-grandeur which  
Is aspectable from the place,  
Had struck the hill as with a mace  
Sudden and cleaving. You might fill  
That little nook with the little cloud  
Which sometimes lieth by the moon  
To beautify a night of June ;  
A cavelike nook which, opening all  
To the wide sea, is disallowed  
From its own earth's sweet pastoral ;  
Cavelike, but roofless overhead  
And made of verdant banks instead  
Of any rocks, with flowerets spread  
Instead of spar and stalactite,  
Cowslips and daisies gold and white :  
Such pretty flowers on such green sward,  
You think the sea they look toward  
Doth serve them for another sky  
As warm and blue as that on high.

## VIII.

And in this hollow is a seat,  
And when you shall have crept to it,  
Slipping down the banks too steep  
To be o'erbrowzèd by the sheep,  
Do not think—though at your feet  
The cliff's disrupt—you shall behold  
The line where earth and ocean meet ;  
You sit too much above to view  
The solemn confluence of the two :  
You can hear them as they greet,  
You can hear that evermore  
Distance-softened noise more old  
Than Nereid's singing, the tide spent  
Joining soft issues with the shore  
In harmony of discontent,  
And when you harken to the grave  
Lamenting of the underwave,  
You must believe in earth's communion  
Albeit you witness not the union.

## IX.

Except that sound, the place is full  
Of silences, which when you cull  
By any word, it thrills you so  
That presently you let them grow  
To meditation's fullest length  
Across your soul with a soul's strength :  
And as they touch your soul, they borrow

Both of its grandeur and its sorrow,  
That deathly odour which the clay  
Leaves on its deathlessness alway.

## X.

Alway! alway? must this be?  
Rapid Soul from city gone,  
Dost thou carry inwardly  
What doth make the city's moan?  
Must this deep sigh of thine own  
Haunt thee with humanity?  
Green visioned banks that are too steep  
To be o'erbrowzèd by the sheep,  
May all sad thoughts adown you creep  
Without a shepherd? Mighty sea,  
Can we dwarf thy magnitude  
And fit it to our straitest mood?  
O fair, fair Nature, are we thus  
Impotent and querulous  
Among thy workings glorious,  
Wealth and sanctities, that still  
Leave us vacant and defiled  
And wailing like a soft-kissed child,  
Kissed soft against his will?

## XI.

God, God!  
With a child's voice I cry,  
Weak, sad, confidingly—  
God, God!

Thou knowest, eyelids, raised not always up  
Unto Thy love, (as none of ours are) droop

As ours, o'er many a tear;

Thou knowest, though Thy universe is broad,  
Two little tears suffice to cover all:

Thou knowest, Thou who art so prodigal  
Of beauty. we are oft but stricken deer  
Expiring in the woods, that care for none  
Of those delightful flowers they die upon.

## XII.

O blissful Mouth which breathed the mournful breath  
We name our souls, self-spoilt!—by that strong passion  
Which paled Thee once with sighs, by that strong death  
Which made Thee once unbreathing—from the wrack  
Themselves have called around them, call them back,  
Back to Thee in continuous aspiration!

For here, O Lord,

For here they travel vainly, vainly pass  
From city-pavement to untrodden sward  
Where the lark finds her deep nest in the grass  
Cold with the earth's last dew. Yea, very vain  
The greatest speed of all these souls of men  
Unless they travel upward to the throne  
Where sittest THOU the satisfying ONE,  
With help for sins and holy perfectings  
For all requirements: while the archangel, raising  
Unto Thy face his full ecstatic gazing,  
Forgets the rush and rapture of his wings.



## TO BETTINE,

THE CHILD-FRIEND OF GOETHE.



“I have the second sight, Goethe!”—*Letters of a Child.*

### I.

BETTINE, friend of Goethe,  
*Hadst* thou the second sight—  
Upturning worship and delight  
With such a loving duty  
To his grand face, as women will,  
The childhood 'neath thine eyelids still?

### II.

—Before his shrine to doom thee,  
Using the same child's smile  
That heaven and earth, beheld erewhile  
For the first time, won from thee  
Ere star and flower grew dim and dead  
Save at his feet and o'er his head?

## III.

—Digging thine heart and throwing  
Away its childhood's gold,  
That so its woman-depth might hold  
His spirit's overflowing?  
(For surging souls, no worlds can bound,  
Their channel in the heart have found.)

## IV.

O child, to change appointed,  
Thou hadst not second sight!  
What eyes the future view aright  
Unless by tears anointed?  
Yea, only tears themselves can show  
The burning ones that have to flow.

## V.

O woman, deeply loving,  
Thou hadst not second sight!  
The star is very high and bright,  
And none can see it moving.  
Love looks around, below, above,  
Yet all his prophecy is—love.

## VI.

The bird thy childhood's playing  
Sent onward o'er the sea,  
Thy dove of hope came back to thee  
Without a leaf: art laying  
Its wet cold wing no sun can dry,  
Still in thy bosom secretly?

## VII.

Our Goethe's friend, Bettine,  
I have the second sight !  
The stone upon his grave is white,  
The funeral stone between ye ;  
And in thy mirror thou hast viewed  
Some change as hardly understood.

## VIII.

Where's childhood ? where is Goethe ?  
The tears are in thine eyes.  
Nay, thou shalt yet reorganize  
Thy maidenhood of beauty  
In his own glory, which is smooth  
Of wrinkles and sublime in youth.

## IX.

The poet's arms have wound thee,  
He breathes upon thy brow,  
He lifts thee upward in the glow  
Of his great genius round thee,—  
The childlike poet undefiled  
Preserving evermore **THE CHILD.**

## MAN AND NATURE.

---

A SAD man on a summer day  
Did look upon the earth and say—

‘ Purple cloud, the hill-top binding,  
Folded hills, the valleys wind in,  
Valleys, with fresh streams among you,  
Streams, with bosky trees along you,  
Trees, with many birds and blossoms,  
Birds, with music-trembling bosoms,  
Blossoms, dropping dews that wreathe you  
To your fellow flowers beneath you,  
Flowers, that constellate on earth,  
Earth, that shakest to the mirth  
Of the merry Titan ocean,  
All his shining hair in motion !  
Why am I thus the only one  
Who can be dark beneath the sun ?’

But when the summer day was past,  
He looked to heaven and smiled at last,

Self-answered so—

‘ Because, O cloud,  
Pressing with thy crumpled shroud  
Heavily on mountain top,—  
Hills, that almost seem to drop  
Stricken with a misty death  
To the valleys underneath,—  
Valleys, sighing with the torrent,—  
Waters, streaked with branches horrent,—  
Branchless trees, that shake your head  
Wildly o’er your blossoms spread  
Where the common flowers are found,—  
Flowers, with foreheads to the ground,—  
Ground, that shrieketh while the sea  
With his iron smiteth thee—  
I am, besides, the only one  
Who can be bright *without* the sun.’

## A SEA-SIDE WALK.

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### I.

WE walked beside the sea  
After a day which perished silently  
Of its own glory—like the princess weird  
Who, combating the Genius, scorched and seared,  
Uttered with burning breath, ‘Ho! victory!’  
And sank adown, an heap of ashes pale:  
So runs the Arab tale.

### II.

The sky above us showed  
A universal and unmoving cloud  
On which the cliffs permitted us to see  
Only the outline of their majesty,  
As master-minds when gazed at by the crowd:  
And shining with a gloom, the water grey  
Swang in its moon-taught way.

### III.

Nor moon, nor stars were out;  
They did not dare to tread so soon about,

Though trembling, in the footsteps of the sun :  
The light was neither night's nor day's, but one  
Which, life-like, had a beauty in its doubt,  
And silence's impassioned breathings round  
Seemed wandering into sound.

## IV.

O solemn-beating heart  
Of nature ! I have knowledge that thou art  
Bound unto man's by cords he cannot sever ;  
And, what time they are slackened by him ever,  
So to attest his own supernal part,  
Still runneth thy vibration fast and strong  
The slackened cord along :

## V.

For though we never spoke  
Of the grey water and the shaded rock,  
Dark wave and stone unconsciously were fused  
Into the plaintive speaking that we used  
Of absent friends and memories unforsook ;  
And, had we seen each other's face, we had  
Seen haply each was sad.

## THE SEA-MEW.

AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED TO M. E. H.



### I.

How joyously the young sea-mew  
Lay dreaming on the waters blue  
Whereon our little bark had thrown  
A little shade, the only one,  
But shadows ever man pursue.

### II.

Familiar with the waves and free  
As if their own white foam were he,  
His heart upon the heart of ocean  
Lay learning all its mystic motion,  
And throbbing to the throbbing sea.

### III.

And such a brightness in his eye  
As if the ocean and the sky  
Within him had lit up and nurst  
A soul God gave him not at first,  
To comprehend their majesty.



## IV.

We were not cruel, yet did sunder  
His white wing from the blue waves under,  
And bound it, while his fearless eyes  
Shone up to ours in calm surprise,  
As deeming us some ocean wonder.

## V.

We bore our ocean bird unto  
A grassy place where he might view  
The flowers that curtsy to the bees,  
The waving of the tall green trees,  
The falling of the silver dew.

## VI.

But flowers of earth were pale to him  
Who had seen the rainbow fishes swim;  
And when earth's dew around him lay  
He thought of ocean's wingëd spray,  
And his eye waxëd sad and dim.

## VII.

The green trees round him only made  
A prison with their darksome shade;  
And drooped his wing, and mournëd he  
For his own boundless glittering sea—  
Albeit he knew not they could fade.

## VIII.

Then One her gladsome face did bring,  
Her gentle voice's murmuring,  
In ocean's stead his heart to move  
And teach him what was human love :  
He thought it a strange, mournful thing.

## IX.

He lay down in his grief to die,  
(First looking to the sea-like sky  
That hath no waves) because, alas !  
Our human touch did on him pass,  
And with our touch, our agony.

## FELICIA HEMANS.

TO L. E. L., REFERRING TO HER MONODY ON THE POETESS.



### I.

THOU bay-crowned living One that o'er the bay-  
crowned Dead art bowing,  
And o'er the shadeless moveless brow the vital shadow  
throwing,  
And o'er the sighless songless lips the wail and music  
wedding,  
And dropping o'er the tranquil eyes the tears not of  
their shedding!—

### II.

Take music from the silent Dead whose meaning is  
completer,  
Reserve thy tears for living brows where all such  
tears are meeter,  
And leave the violets in the grass to brighten where  
thou treadest,  
No flowers for her! no need of flowers, albeit 'bring  
flowers,' thou saidest.

## III.

Yes, flowers, to crown the 'cup and lute,' since both  
    may come to breaking,  
Or flowers, to greet the 'bride'—the heart's own  
    beating works its aching;  
Or flowers, to soothe the 'captive's' sight, from earth's  
    free bosom gathered,  
Reminding of his earthly hope, then withering as it  
    withered:

## IV.

But bring not near the solemn corse a type of human  
    seeming,  
Lay only dust's stern verity upon the dust undreaming:  
And while the calm perpetual stars shall look upon it  
    solely,  
Her spher'd soul shall look on *them* with eyes more  
    bright and holy.

## V.

Nor mourn, O living One, because her part in life was  
    mourning:  
Would she have lost the poet's fire for anguish of the  
    burning?  
The minstrel harp, for the strained string? the tripod,  
    for the afflated  
Woe? or the vision, for those tears in which it shone  
    dilated?

## VI.

Perhaps she shuddered while the world's cold hand  
her brow was wreathing,  
But never wronged that mystic breath which breathed  
in all her breathing,  
Which drew from rocky earth and man, abstractions  
high and moving,  
Beauty, if not the beautiful, and love, if not the loving.

## VII.

Such visionings have paled in sight; the Saviour she  
descrieth,  
And little recks *who* wreathed the brow which on His  
bosom lieth :  
The whiteness of His innocence o'er all her garments,  
flowing,  
There learneth she the sweet 'new song' she will not  
mourn in knowing.

## VIII.

Be happy, crowned and living One! and as thy dust  
decayeth  
May thine own England say for thee what now for  
Her it sayeth—  
'Albeit softly in our ears her silver song was ringing,  
The foot-fall of her parting soul is softer than her  
singing.'

## L. E. L.'S LAST QUESTION.



‘Do you think of me as I think of you?’

*From her poem written during the voyage to the Cape.*

### I.

‘Do you think of me as I think of you,  
My friends, my friends?’—She said it from the sea,  
The English minstrel in her minstrelsy,  
While, under brighter skies than erst she knew,  
Her heart grew dark, and groped there as the blind  
To reach across the waves friends left behind—  
‘Do you think of me as I think of you?’

### II.

It seemed not much to ask—‘as *I* of *you*?’  
We all do ask the same; no eyelids cover  
Within the meekest eyes that question over:  
And little in the world the Loving do  
But sit (among the rocks?) and listen for  
The echo of their own love evermore—  
‘Do you think of me as I think of you?’

## III.

Love-learn'd she had sung of love and love,—  
And like a child that, sleeping with dropt head  
Upon the fairy-book he lately read,  
Whatever household noises round him move,  
Hears in his dream some elfin turbulence,—  
Even so suggestive to her inward sense,  
All sounds of life assumed one tune of love.

## IV.

And when the glory of her dream withdrew,  
When knightly gestes and courtly pageantries  
Were broken in her visionary eyes  
By tears the solemn seas attested true,—  
Forgetting that sweet lute beside her hand,  
She asked not,—‘Do you praise me, O my land?’  
But,—‘Think ye of me, friends, as I of you?’

## V.

Hers was the hand that played for many a year  
Love's silver phrase for England, smooth and well.  
Would God, her heart's more inward oracle  
In that lone moment might confirm her dear!  
For when her questioned friends in agony  
Made passionate response, ‘We think of thee,’  
Her place was in the dust, too deep to hear.

## VI.

Could she not wait to catch their answering breath?  
Was she content, content with ocean's sound  
Which dashed its mocking infinite around  
One thirsty for a little love?—beneath  
Those stars content, where last her song had gone,—  
They mute and cold in radiant life, as soon  
Their singer was to be, in darksome death?\*

## VII.

Bring your vain answers—cry, 'We think of thee!'  
How think ye of her? warm in long ago  
Delights? or crowned with budding bays? Not so.  
None smile and none are crowned where lieth she,  
With all her visions unfulfilled save one,  
Her childhood's, of the palm-trees in the sun—  
And lo! their shadow on her sepulchre!

## VIII.

'Do ye think of me as I think of you?'—  
O friends, O kindred, O dear brotherhood  
Of all the world! what are we that we should  
For covenants of long affection sue?  
Why press so near each other when the touch  
Is barred by graves? Not much, and yet too much  
Is this 'Think of me as I think of you.'

\* Her lyric on the polar star came home with her latest papers.



## IX.

But while on mortal lips I shape anew  
A sigh to mortal issues, verily  
Above the unshaken stars that see us die,  
A vocal pathos rolls ; and HE who drew  
All life from dust, and for all tasted death,  
By death and life and love, appealing saith,  
*Do you think of me as I think of you ?*

## CROWNED AND WEDDED.



### I.

WHEN last before her people's face her own fair face  
she bent,  
Within the meek projection of that shade she was  
content  
To erase the child-smile from her lips, which seemed  
as if it might  
Be still kept holy from the world to childhood still in  
sight—  
To erase it with a solemn vow, a princely vow—to  
rule,  
A priestly vow—to rule by grace of God the pitiful,  
A very godlike vow—to rule in right and righteousness  
And with the law and for the land—so God the vower  
bless !

### II.

The minster was alight that day but not with fire, I  
ween,  
And long-drawn glitterings swept adown that mighty  
aisled scene ;

The priests stood stolèd in their pomp, the sworded  
chiefs in theirs,  
And so, the collared knights, and so, the civil  
ministers,  
And so, the waiting lords and dames, and little pages  
best  
At holding trains, and legates so, from countries east  
and west ;  
So, alien princes, native peers, and high-born ladies  
bright,  
Along whose brows the Queen's, now crowned, flashed  
coronets to light ;  
And so, the people at the gates with priestly hands on  
high  
Which bring the first anointing to all legal majesty ;  
And so the DEAD, who lie in rows beneath the minster  
floor,  
There verily an awful state maintaining evermore ;  
The statesman whose clean palm will kiss no bribe  
whate'er it be,  
The courtier who for no fair queen will rise up to his  
knee,  
The court-dame who for no court-tire will leave her  
shroud behind,  
The laureate who no courtlier rhyme than 'dust to  
dust' can find,  
The kings and queens who having made that vow and  
worn that crown,  
Descended unto lower thrones and darker, deep adown:

*Dieu et mon droit*—what is 't to them? what meaning  
can it have?—

The King of kings, the right of death—God's judgment  
and the grave.

And when betwixt the quick and dead the young fair  
queen had vowed,

The living shouted 'May she live! Victoria, live!'  
aloud:

And as the loyal shouts went up, true spirits prayed  
between,

'The blessings happy monarchs have be thine, O  
crown'd queen!'

### III.

But now before her people's face she bendeth hers anew,  
And calls them, while she vows, to be her witness  
thereunto.

She vowed to rule, and in that oath her childhood put  
away:

She doth maintain her womanhood, in vowing love  
to-day.

O lovely lady! let her vow! such lips become such  
vows,

And fairer goeth bridal wreath than crown with vernal  
brows.

O lovely lady! let her vow! yea, let her vow to  
love!

And though she be no less a queen, with purples  
hung above,

The pageant of a court behind, the royal kin around,  
And woven gold to catch her looks turned maidenly to  
ground,

Yet may the bride-veil hide from her a little of that  
state,

While loving hopes for retinues about her sweetness  
wait.

SHE vows to love who vowed to rule—(the chosen at  
her side)

Let none say, God preserve the queen! but rather,  
Bless the bride!

None blow the trump, none bend the knee, none vio-  
late the dream

Wherein no monarch but a wife she to herself may  
seem.

Or if ye say, Preserve the queen! oh, breathe it  
inward low—

She is a *woman*, and *beloved*! and 'tis enough but so.

Count it enough, thou noble prince who tak'st her by  
the hand

And claimest for thy lady-love our lady of the land!

And since, Prince Albert, men have called thy spirit  
high and rare,

And true to truth and brave for truth as some at  
Augsburg were,

We charge thee by thy lofty thoughts and by thy  
poet-mind

Which not by glory and degree takes measure of man-  
kind,

Esteem that wedded hand less dear for sceptre than  
for ring,  
And hold her uncrowned womanhood to be the royal  
thing.

## IV.

And now, upon our queen's last vow what blessings  
shall we pray?  
None straitened to a shallow crown will suit our lips  
to-day:  
Behold, they must be free as love, they must be broad  
as free,  
Even to the borders of heaven's light and earth's  
humanity.  
Long live she!—send up loyal shouts, and true hearts  
pray between,—  
'The blessings happy PEASANTS have, be thine, O  
crowned queen!'

## CROWNED AND BURIED.



### I.

NAPOLEON!—years ago, and that great word  
Compáct of human breath in hate and dread  
And exultation, skied us overhead—  
An atmosphere whose lightning was the sword  
Scathing the cedars of the world,—drawn down  
In burnings, by the metal of a crown.

### II.

Napoleon!—nations, while they cursed that name,  
Shook at their own curse; and while others bore  
Its sound, as of a trumpet, on before,  
Brass-fronted legions justified its fame;  
And dying men on trampled battle-sods  
Near their last silence uttered it for God's.

### III.

Napoleon!—sages, with high foreheads drooped,  
Did use it for a problem; children small  
Leapt up to greet it, as at manhood's call;

Priests blessed it from their altars overstooped  
By meek-eyed Christs ; and widows with a moan  
Spake it, when questioned why they sate alone.

## IV.

That name consumed the silence of the snows  
In Alpine keeping, holy and cloud-hid ;  
The mimic eagles dared what Nature's did,  
And over-rushed her mountainous repose  
In search of eyries : and the Egyptian river  
Mingled the same word with its grand 'For ever.'

## V.

That name was shouted near the pyramidal  
Nilotic tombs, whose mummied habitants,  
Packed to humanity's significance,  
Motioned it back with stillness,—shouts as idle  
As hireling artists' work of myrrh and spice  
Which swathed last glories round the Ptolemies.

## VI.

The world's face changed to hear it ; kingly men  
Came down in chidden babes' bewilderment  
From autocratic places, each content  
With sprinkled ashes for anointing : then  
The people laughed or wondered for the nonce,  
To see one throne a composite of thrones.



## VII.

Napoleon!—even the torrid vastitude  
 Of India felt in throbbings of the air  
 That name which scattered by disastrous blare  
 All Europe's bound-lines,—drawn afresh in blood.  
 Napoleon!—from the Russias west to Spain:  
 And Austria trembled till ye heard her chain.

## VIII.

And Germany was 'ware; and Italy  
 Oblivious of old fames—her laurel-locked,  
 High-ghosted Cæsars passing uninvoked—  
 Did crumble her own ruins with her knee,  
 To serve a newer: ay! but Frenchmen cast  
 A future from them nobler than her past:

## IX.

For verily though France augustly rose  
 With that raised NAME, and did assume by such  
 The purple of the world, none gave so much  
 As she in purchase—to speak plain, in loss—  
 Whose hands, toward freedom stretched, dropped  
     paralyzed  
 To wield a sword or fit an undersized

## X.

King's crown to a great man's head. And though along  
 Her Paris' streets, did float on frequent streams  
 Of triumph, pictured or emmarbled dreams

Dreamt right by genius in a world gone wrong,—  
No dream of all so won was fair to see  
As the lost vision of her liberty.

## XI.

Napoleon!—'twas a high name lifted high :  
It met at last God's thunder sent to clear  
Our compassing and covering atmosphere  
And open a clear sight beyond the sky  
Of supreme empire ; this of earth's was done—  
And kings crept out again to feel the sun.

## XII.

The kings crept out—the peoples sate at home,  
And finding the long-invoked peace  
(A pall embroidered with worn images  
Of rights divine) too scant to cover doom  
Such as they suffered, cursed the corn that grew  
Rankly, to bitter bread, on Waterloo.

## XIII.

A deep gloom centered in the deep repose ;  
The nations stood up mute to count their dead :  
And he who owned the NAME which vibrated  
Through silence,—trusting to his noblest foes  
When earth was all too grey for chivalry,  
Died of their mercies 'mid the desert sea-

## XIV.

O wild St. Helen! very still she kept him,  
With a green willow for all pyramid,  
Which stirred a little if the low wind did,  
A little more, if pilgrims overwept him,  
Disparting the lithe boughs to see the clay  
Which seemed to cover his for judgment-day.

## XV.

Nay, not so long! France kept her old affection  
As deeply as the sepulchre the corse;  
Until, dilated by such love's remorse  
To a new angel of the resurrection,  
She cried, 'Behold, thou England! I would have  
The dead whereof thou wottest, from that grave.'

## XVI.

And England answered in the courtesy  
Which, ancient foes turned lovers, may befit,—  
'Take back thy dead! and when thou buriest it,  
Throw in all former strifes 'twixt thee and me.'  
Amen, mine England! 'tis a courteous claim:  
But ask a little room too—for thy shame!

## XVII.

Because it was not well, it was not well,  
Nor tuneful with thy lofty-chanted part  
Among the Oceanides,—that Heart

To bind and bare and vex with vulture fell.  
I would, my noble England, men might seek  
All crimson stains upon thy breast—not cheek!

## XVIII.

I would that hostile fleets had scarred Torbay,  
Instead of the lone ship which waited moored  
Until thy princely purpose was assured,  
Then left a shadow, not to pass away--  
Not for to-night's moon, nor to-morrow's sun:  
Green watching hills, ye witnessed what was done! \*

## XIX.

But since it *was* done,—in sepulchral dust  
We fain would pay back something of our debt  
To France, if not to honour, and forget  
How through much fear we falsified the trust  
Of a fallen foe and exile. We return  
Orestes to Electra—in his urn.

## XX.

A little urn—a little dust inside,  
Which once outbalanced the large earth, albeit  
To-day a four-years child might carry it  
Sleek-browed and smiling, 'Let the burden 'bide!'  
Orestes to Electra!—O fair town  
Of Paris, how the wild tears will run down

\* Written at Torquay.

## XXI.

And run back in the chariot-marks of time,  
When all the people shall come forth to meet  
The passive victor, death-still in the street  
He rode through 'mid the shouting and bell-chime  
And martial music, under eagles which  
Dyed their rapacious beaks at Austerlitz !

## XXII.

Napoleon!—he hath come again, borne home  
Upon the popular ebbing heart,—a sea  
Which gathers its own wrecks perpetually,  
Majestically moaning. Give him room!  
Room for the dead in Paris! welcome solemn  
And grave-deep, 'neath the cannon-moulded column! \*

## XXIII.

There, weapon spent and warrior spent may rest  
From roar of fields,—provided Jupiter  
Dare trust Saturnus to lie down so near  
His bolts!—and this he may: for, dispossessed  
Of any godship lies the godlike arm—  
The goat, Jove sucked, as likely to do harm.

## XXIV.

And yet . . . Napoleon!—the recovered name  
Shakes the old casements of the world; and we  
Look out upon the passing pageantry,

\* It was the first intention to bury him under the column.

Attesting that the Dead makes good his claim  
To a French grave,—another kingdom won,  
The last, of few spans—by Napoleon.

## XXV.

Blood fell like dew beneath his sunrise—sooth !  
But glittered dew-like in the covenanted  
Meridian light. He was a despot—granted !  
But the *avros* of his autocratic mouth  
Said yea i' the people's French ; he magnified  
The image of the freedom he denied :

## XXVI.

And if they asked for rights, he made reply  
'Ye have my glory!'—and so, drawing round them  
His ample purple, glorified and bound them  
In an embrace that seemed identity.  
He ruled them like a tyrant—true ! but none  
Were ruled like slaves : each felt Napoleon.

## XXVII.

I do not praise this man : the man was flawed,  
For Adam—much more, Christ !—his knee unbent,  
His hand unclean, his aspiration pent  
Within a sword-sweep—pshaw !—but since he had  
The genius to be loved, why let him have  
The justice to be honoured in his grave.

## XXVIII.

I think this nation's tears thus poured together,  
Better than shouts. I think this funeral  
Grander than crownings, though a Pope bless all.  
I think this grave stronger than thrones. But whether  
The crowned Napoleon or the buried clay  
Be worthier, I discern not : angels may.

## TO FLUSH, MY DOG.



### I.

LOVING friend, the gift of one  
Who her own true faith has run  
Through thy lower nature,\*  
Be my benediction said  
With my hand upon thy head,  
Gentle fellow-creature !

### II.

Like a lady's ringlets brown,  
Flow thy silken ears adown  
Either side demurely  
Of thy silver-suited breast  
Shining out from all the rest  
Of thy body purely.

\* This dog was the gift of my dear and admired friend, Miss Mitford, and belongs to the beautiful race she has rendered celebrated among English and American readers. The Flushes have their laurels as well as the Cæsars,—the chief difference (at least the very head and front of it) consisting, perhaps, in the bald head of the latter under the crown. 1844.



## III.

Darkly brown thy body is,  
Till the sunshine striking this  
    Alchemize its dulness,  
When the sleek curls manifold  
Flash all over into gold  
    With a burnished fulness.

## IV.

Underneath my stroking hand,  
Startled eyes of hazel bland  
    Kindling, growing larger,  
Up thou leapest with a spring,  
Full of prank and curveting,  
    Leaping like a charger.

## V.

Leap! thy broad tail waves a light,  
Leap! thy slender feet are bright,  
    Canopied in fringes;  
Leap! those tasselled ears of thine  
Flicker strangely, fair and fine,  
    Down their golden inches.

## VI.

Yet, my pretty, sportive friend,  
Little is 't to such an end  
    That I praise thy rareness;  
Other dogs may be thy peers  
Haply in these drooping ears  
    And this glossy fairness.

## VII.

But of *thee* it shall be said,  
This dog watched beside a bed  
    Day and night unwearied,  
Watched within a curtained room  
Where no sunbeam brake the gloom  
    Round the sick and dreary.

## VIII.

Roses, gathered for a vase,  
In that chamber died apace,  
    Beam and breeze resigning ;  
This dog only, waited on,  
Knowing that when light is gone  
    Love remains for shining.

## IX.

Other dogs in thymy dew  
Tracked the hares and followed through  
    Sunny moor or meadow ;  
This dog only, crept and crept  
Next a languid cheek that slept,  
    Sharing in the shadow.

## X.

Other dogs of loyal cheer  
Bounded at the whistle clear,  
    Up the woodside hieing ;  
This dog only, watched in reach  
Of a faintly uttered speech  
    Or a louder sighing.

## XI.

And if one or two quick tears  
Dropped upon his glossy ears  
Or a sigh came double,  
Up he sprang in eager haste,  
Fawning, fondling, breathing fast,  
In a tender trouble.

## XII.

And this dog was satisfied  
If a pale thin hand would glide  
Down his dewlaps sloping,—  
Which he pushed his nose within,  
After,—platforming his chin  
On the palm left open.

## XIII.

This dog, if a friendly voice  
Call him now to blither choice  
Than such chamber-keeping,  
‘Come out!’ praying from the door,—  
Presseth backward as before,  
Up against me leaping.

## XIV.

Therefore to this dog will I,  
Tenderly not scornfully,  
Render praise and favour:  
With my hand upon his head,  
Is my benediction said  
Therefore and for ever.

## XV.

And because he loves me so,  
Better than his kind will do  
Often man or woman,  
Give I back more love again  
Than dogs often take of men,  
Leaning from my Human.

## XVI.

Blessings on thee, dog of mine,  
Pretty collars make thee fine,  
Sugared milk make fat thee !  
Pleasures wag on in thy tail,  
Hands of gentle motion fail  
Nevermore, to pat thee !

## XVII.

Downy pillow take thy head,  
Silken coverlid bestead,  
Sunshine help thy sleeping !  
No fly's buzzing wake thee up,  
No man break thy purple cup  
Set for drinking deep in.

## XVIII.

Whiskered cats aointed flee,  
Sturdy stoppers keep from thee  
Cologne distillations ;  
Nuts lie in thy path for stones,  
And thy feast-day macaroons  
Turn to daily rations !

## XIX.

Mock I thee, in wishing weal ?—  
Tears are in my eyes to feel  
    Thou art made so straitly,  
Blessing needs must straiten too,—  
Little canst thou joy or do,  
    Thou who lovest *greatly*.

## XX.

Yet be bless'd to the height  
Of all good and all delight  
    Pervious to thy nature ;  
Only *loved* beyond that line,  
With a love that answers thine,  
    Loving fellow-creature !

## THE DESERTED GARDEN.



I MIND me in the days departed,  
How often underneath the sun  
With childish bounds I used to run  
To a garden long deserted.

The beds and walks were vanished quite;  
And wheresoe'er had struck the spade,  
The greenest grasses Nature laid  
To sanctify her right.

I called the place my wilderness,  
For no one entered there but I;  
The sheep looked in, the grass to espy,  
And passed it ne'ertheless.

The trees were interwoven wild,  
And spread their boughs enough about  
To keep both sheep and shepherd out,  
But not a happy child.

Adventurous joy it was for me !  
I crept beneath the boughs, and found  
A circle smooth of mossy ground  
    Beneath a poplar tree.

Old garden rose-trees hedged it in,  
Bedropt with roses waxen-white  
Well satisfied with dew and light  
    And careless to be seen.

Long years ago it might befall,  
When all the garden flowers were trim,  
The grave old gardener prided him  
    On these the most of all.

Some lady, stately overmuch,  
Here moving with a silken noise,  
Has blushed beside them at the voice  
    That likened her to such.

And these, to make a diadem,  
She often may have plucked and twined,  
Half-smiling as it came to mind  
    That few would look at *them*.

Oh, little thought that lady proud,  
A child would watch her fair white rose,  
When buried lay her whiter brows,  
    And silk was changed for shroud !

Nor thought that gardener, (full of scorns  
For men unlearned and simple phrase,)  
A child would bring it all its praise  
By creeping through the thorns !

To me upon my low moss seat,  
Though never a dream the roses sent  
Of science or love's compliment,  
I ween they smelt as sweet.

It did not move my grief to see  
The trace of human step departed :  
Because the garden was deserted,  
The blither place for me !

Friends, blame me not ! a narrow ken,  
Has childhood twixt the sun and sward ;  
We draw the moral afterward,  
We feel the gladness then.

And gladdest hours for me did glide  
In silence at the rose-tree wall :  
A thrush made gladness musical  
Upon the other side.

Nor he nor I did e'er incline  
To peck or pluck the blossoms white ;  
How should I know but roses might  
Lead lives as glad as mine ?



To make my hermit-home complete,  
I brought clear water from the spring  
Praised in its own low murmuring,  
And cresses glossy wet.

And so, I thought, my likeness grew  
(Without the melancholy tale)  
To 'gentle hermit of the dale,'  
And Angelina too.

For oft I read within my nook  
Such minstrel stories; till the breeze  
Made sounds poetic in the trees,  
And then I shut the book.

If I shut this wherein I write  
I hear no more the wind athwart  
Those trees, nor feel that childish heart  
Delighting in delight.

My childhood from my life is parted,  
My footstep from the moss which drew  
Its fairy circle round : anew  
The garden is deserted.

Another thrush may there rehearse  
The madrigals which sweetest are ;  
No more for me ! myself afar  
Do sing a sadder verse.

Ah me, ah me! when erst I lay  
In that child's-nest so greenly wrought,  
I laughed unto myself and thought  
    'The time will pass away.'

And still I laughed, and did not fear  
But that, whene'er was past away  
The childish time, some happier play  
    My womanhood would cheer.

I knew the time would pass away,  
And yet, beside the rose-tree wall,  
Dear God, how seldom, if at all,  
    Did I look up to pray!

The time is past; and now that grows  
The cypress high among the trees,  
And I behold white sepulchres  
    As well as the white rose,—

When graver, meeker thoughts are given,  
And I have learnt to lift my face,  
Reminded how earth's greenest place  
    The colour draws from heaven,—

It something saith for earthly pain,  
But more for Heavenly promise free,  
That I who was, would shrink to be  
    That happy child again.

## MY DOVES.



O Weisheit ! Du red'st wie eine Taube !—GÖTTE.

My little doves have left a nest  
Upon an Indian tree  
Whose leaves fantastic take their rest  
Or motion from the sea ;  
For, ever there the sea-winds go  
With sunlit paces to and fro.

The tropic flowers looked up to it,  
The tropic stars looked down,  
And there my little doves did sit  
With feathers softly brown,  
And glittering eyes that showed their right  
To general Nature's deep delight.

And God them taught, at every close  
Of murmuring waves beyond  
And green leaves round, to interpose  
Their choral voices fond,  
Interpreting that love must be  
The meaning of the earth and sea.

Fit ministers ! Of living loves  
Theirs hath the calmest fashion,  
Their living voice the likest moves  
To lifeless intonation,  
The lovely monotone of springs  
And winds and such insensate things

My little doves were ta'en away  
From that glad nest of theirs,  
Across an ocean rolling grey,  
And tempest-clouded airs ;  
My little doves, who lately knew  
The sky and wave by warmth and blue.

And now, within the city prison,  
In mist and chillness pent,  
With sudden upward look they listen  
For sounds of past content,  
For lapse of water, swell of breeze,  
Or nut-fruit falling from the trees.

The stir without the glow of passion,  
The triumph of the mart,  
The gold and silver as they clash on  
Man's cold metallic heart,  
The roar of wheels, the cry for bread,  
These only sounds are heard instead.

Yet still, as on my human hand  
    Their fearless heads they lean,  
And almost seem to understand  
    What human musings mean,  
(Their eyes with such a plaintive shine  
Are fastened upwardly to mine!)

Soft falls their chant as on the nest  
    Beneath the sunny zone ;  
For love that stirred it in their breast  
    Has not aweary grown,  
And 'neath the city's shade can keep  
The well of music clear and deep.

And love that keeps the music, fills  
    With pastoral memories ;  
All echoings from out the hills,  
    All droppings from the skies,  
All flowings from the wave and wind,  
Remembered in their chant, I find.

So teach ye me the wisest part,  
    My little doves! to move  
Along the city-ways with heart  
    Assured by holy love,  
And vocal with such songs as own  
A fountain to the world unknown.

'Twas hard to sing by Babel's stream—  
More hard, in Babel's street :  
But if the soulless creatures deem  
Their music not unmeet  
For sunless walls—let *us* begin,  
Who wear immortal wings within!

To me, fair memories belong  
Of scenes that used to bless,  
For no regret, but present song  
And lasting thankfulness,  
And very soon to break away,  
Like types, in purer things than they.

I will have hopes that cannot fade,  
For flowers the valley yields ;  
I will have humble thoughts instead  
Of silent, dewy fields :  
My spirit and my God shall be  
My sea-ward hill, my boundless sea.

## HECTOR IN THE GARDEN.



### I.

NINE years old ! The first of any  
Seem the happiest years that come :  
Yet when *I* was nine, I said  
No such word ! I thought instead  
That the Greeks had used as many  
In besieging Ilium.

### II.

Nine green years had scarcely brought me  
To my childhood's haunted spring ;  
I had life, like flowers and bees  
In betwixt the country trees,  
And the sun the pleasure taught me  
Which he teacheth every thing.

### III.

If the rain fell, there was sorrow,  
Little head leant on the pane,  
Little finger drawing down it  
The long trailing drops upon it,  
And the ' Rain, rain, come to-morrow,'  
Said for charm against the rain.

## IV.

Such a charm was right Canidian  
Though you meet it with a jeer !  
If I said it long enough,  
Then the rain hummed dimly off  
And the thrush with his pure Lydian  
Was left only to the ear ;

## V.

And the sun and I together  
Went a-rushing out of doors :  
We our tender spirits drew  
Over hill and dale in view,  
Glimmering hither, glimmering thither,  
In the footsteps of the showers.

## VI.

Underneath the chestnuts dripping,  
Through the grasses wet and fair,  
Straight I sought my garden-ground  
With the laurel on the mound,  
And the pear-tree oversweeping  
A side-shadow of green air.

## VII.

In the garden lay supinely  
A huge giant wrought of spade !  
Arms and legs were stretched at length  
In a passive giant strength,—  
The fine meadow turf, cut finely,  
Round them laid and interlaid.



## VIII.

Call him Hector, son of Priam !  
Such his title and degree.  
With my rake I smoothed his brow,  
Both his cheeks I weeded through,  
But a rhymers such as I am,  
Scarce can sing his dignity.

## IX.

Eyes of gentianellas azure,  
Staring, winking at the skies ;  
Nose of gillyflowers and box ;  
Scented grasses put for locks,  
Which a little breeze at pleasure  
Set a-waving round his eyes :

## X.

Brazen helm of daffodillies,  
With a glitter toward the light ;  
Purple violets for the mouth,  
Breathing perfumes west and south ;  
And a sword of flashing lilies,  
Holden ready for the fight :

## XI.

And a breastplate made of daisies,  
Closely fitting, leaf on leaf ;  
Periwinkles interlaced  
Drawn for belt about the waist ;  
While the brown bees, humming praises,  
Shot their arrows round the chief.

## XII.

And who knows, (I sometimes wondered,)  
If the disembodied soul  
Of old Hector, once of Troy,  
Might not take a dreary joy  
Here to enter—if it thundered,  
Rolling up the thunder-roll?

## XIII.

Rolling this way from Troy-ruin,  
In this body rude and rife  
Just to enter, and take rest  
'Neath the daisies of the breast—  
They, with tender roots, renewing  
His heroic heart to life?

## XIV.

Who could know? I sometimes started  
At a motion or a sound!  
Did his mouth speak—naming Troy  
With an *οτοτοτοτοι*?  
Did the pulse of the Strong-hearted  
Make the daisies tremble round?

## XV.

It was hard to answer, often:  
But the birds sang in the tree,  
But the little birds sang bold  
In the pear-tree green and old,  
And my terror seemed to soften  
Through the courage of their glee.

## XVI.

Oh, the birds, the tree, the ruddy  
And white blossoms sleek with rain !  
Oh, my garden rich with pansies !  
Oh, my childhood's bright romances !  
All revive, like Hector's body,  
And I see them stir again.

## XVII.

And despite life's changes, chances,  
And despite the deathbell's toll,  
They press on me in full seeming :  
Help, some angel ! stay this dreaming !  
As the birds sang in the branches,  
Sing God's patience through my soul !

## XVIII.

That no dreamer, no neglecter  
Of the present's work unsped,  
I may wake up and be doing,  
Life's heroic ends pursuing,  
Though my past is dead as Hector,  
And though Hector is twice dead.

## SLEEPING AND WATCHING.



### I.

SLEEP on, baby, on the floor,  
Tired of all the playing :  
Sleep with smile the sweeter for  
That, you dropped away in.  
On your curls' full roundness stand  
Golden lights serenely ;  
One cheek, pushed out by the hand,  
Folds the dimple inly :  
Little head and little foot  
Heavy laid for pleasure,  
Underneath the lids half shut,  
Slants the shining azure.  
Open-soul in noonday sun,  
So you lie and slumber :  
Nothing evil having done,  
Nothing can encumber.

## II.

I, who cannot sleep as well,  
Shall I sigh to view you ?  
Or sigh further to foretell  
All that may undo you ?  
Nay, keep smiling, little child,  
Ere the sorrow neareth :  
I will smile too ! patience mild  
Pleasure's token weareth.  
Nay, keep sleeping before loss :  
I shall sleep though losing !  
As by cradle, so by cross,  
Sure is the reposing.

## III.

And God knows who sees us twain,  
Child at childish leisure,  
I am near as tired of pain  
As you seem of pleasure.  
Very soon too, by His grace  
Gently wrapt around me,  
Shall I show as calm a face,  
Shall I sleep as soundly.  
Differing in this, that you  
Clasp your playthings, sleeping,  
While my hand shall drop the few  
Given to my keeping :  
Differing in this, that I  
Sleeping shall be colder,

And in waking presently,  
Brighter to beholder:  
Differing in this beside  
    (Sleeper, have you heard me ?  
Do you move, and open wide  
    Eyes of wonder toward me ?)—  
That while you I thus recall  
    From your sleep, I solely,  
Me from mine an angel shall,  
    With reveillie holy.

## SOUNDS.



Ἡκουσας η ουκ ηκουσας ;—

ÆSCHYLUS.

### I.

HARKEN, harken !

The rapid river carrieth

Many noises underneath

The hoary ocean :

Teaching his solemnity

Sounds of inland life and glee

Learnt beside the waving tree

When the winds in summer prank

Toss the shades from bank to bank,

And the quick rains, in emotion

Which rather gladdens earth than grieves,

Count and visibly rehearse

The pulses of the universe

Upon the summer leaves—

Learnt among the lilies straight,

When they bow them to the weight

Of many bees whose hidden hum

Seemeth from themselves to come—

Learnt among the grasses green  
 Where the rustling mice are seen  
 By the gleaming, as they run,  
 Of their quick eyes in the sun;  
 And lazy sheep are browsing through  
 With their noses trailed in dew;  
 And the squirrel leaps adown  
 Holding fast the filbert brown;  
 And the lark, with more of mirth  
 In his song than suits the earth,  
 Droppeth some in soaring high,  
 To pour the rest out in the sky;  
 While the woodland doves apart  
 In the copse's leafy heart,  
 Solitary, not ascetic,  
 Hidden and yet vocal, seem  
 Joining, in a lovely psalm,  
 Man's despondence, nature's calm,  
 Half mystical and half pathetic,  
 Like a singing in a dream.\*  
 All these sounds the river telleth,

\* 'While floating up bright forms ideal,  
 Mistress or friend, around me stream;  
 Half sense-supplied, and half unreal,  
 Like music mingling with a dream.'

*John Kenyon.*

I do not doubt that the 'music' of the two concluding lines mingled, though very unconsciously, with my own 'dream,' and gave their form and pressure to the above distich. The ideas however being sufficiently distinct, I am satisfied with sending this note to the press after my verses, and with acknowledging another obligation to the valued friend to whom I already owe so many. 1844.



Softened to an undertone  
Which ever and anon he swelleth  
By a burden of his own,  
In the ocean's ear :  
Ay, and ocean seems to hear  
With an inward gentle scorn,  
Smiling to his caverns worn.

## III.

Harken, harken !  
The child is shouting at his play  
Just in the tramping funeral's way ;  
The widow moans as she turns aside  
To shun the face of the blushing bride  
While, shaking the tower of the ancient church,  
The marriage bells do swing ;  
And in the shadow of the porch  
An idiot sits with his lean hands full  
Of hedgerow flowers and a poet's skull,  
Laughing loud and gibbering  
Because it is so brown a thing,  
While he sticketh the gaudy poppies red  
In and out the senseless head  
Where all sweet fancies grew instead :  
And you may hear at the self-same time  
Another poet who reads his rhyme,  
Low as a brook in summer air,  
Save when he droppeth his voice adown  
To dream of the amaranthine crown

His mortal brows shall wear :  
And a baby cries with a feeble sound  
'Neath the weary weight of the life new-found,  
And an old man groans,—with his testament  
Only half-signed,—for the life that's spent ;  
And lovers twain do softly say,  
As they sit on a grave, ' For aye, for aye ;'  
And foemen twain, while Earth their mother  
Looks greenly upward, curse each other :  
A school-boy drones his task, with looks  
Cast over the page to the elm-tree rooks ;  
A lonely student cries aloud  
*Eureka !* clasping at his shroud ;  
A beldame's age-cracked voice doth sing  
To a little infant slumbering ;  
A maid forgotten weeps alone,  
Muffling her sobs on the trysting-stone ;  
A sick man wakes at his own mouth's wail,  
A gossip coughs in her thrice-told tale,  
A muttering gamester shakes the dice,  
A reaper foretells goodluck from the skies,  
A monarch vows as he lifts his hand to them ;  
A patriot leaving his native land to them,  
Cries to the world against perjured state ;  
A priest disserts  
Upon linen skirts,  
A sinner screams for one hope more,  
A dancer's feet do palpitate  
A piper's music out on the floor ;  
And nigh to the awful Dead, the living

Low speech and stealthy steps are giving,  
Because he cannot hear;  
And *he* who on that narrow bier  
Has room enough, is closely wound  
In a silence piercing more than sound.

## III.

Harken, harken !  
God speaketh to thy soul,  
Using the súpreme voice which doth confound  
All life with consciousness of Deity,  
All senses into one,—  
As the seer-saint of Patmos, loving John  
(For whom did backward roll  
The cloud-gate of the future) turned to *see*  
The Voice which spake. It speaketh now,  
Through the regular breath of the calm creation,  
Through the moan of the creature's desolation  
Striking, and in its stroke resembling  
The memory of a solemn vow  
Which pierceth the din of a festival  
To one in the midst,—and he letteth fall  
The cup with a sudden trembling.

## IV.

Harken, harken !  
God speaketh in thy soul,  
Saying, ' O thou that movest  
With feeble steps across this earth of Mine,

To break beside the fount thy golden bowl  
And spill its purple wine,—  
Look up to heaven and see how, like a scroll,  
My right hand hath thine immortality  
In an eternal grasping ! thou, that lovest  
The songful birds and grasses underfoot,  
And also what change mars and tombs pollute—  
*I am the end of love ! give love to Me !*  
O thou that sinnest, grace doth more abound  
Than all thy sin ! sit still beneath My rood,  
And count the droppings of My victim-blood,  
And seek none other sound !'

## v.

Harken, harken !  
Shall we hear the lapsing river  
And our brother's sighing ever,  
And not the voice of God ?

## THE SOUL'S EXPRESSION.



WITH stammering lips and insufficient sound  
I strive and struggle to deliver right  
That music of my nature, day and night  
With dream and thought and feeling interwound,  
And inly answering all the senses round  
With octaves of a mystic depth and height  
Which step out grandly to the infinite  
From the dark edges of the sensual ground.  
This song of soul I struggle to outbear  
Through portals of the sense, sublime and whole,  
And utter all myself into the air:  
But if I did it,—as the thunder-roll  
Breaks its own cloud, my flesh would perish there,  
Before that dread apocalypse of soul.

## THE SERAPH AND POET.



THE seraph sings before the manifest  
God-One, and in the burning of the Seven,  
And with the full life of consummate Heaven  
Heaving beneath him like a mother's breast  
Warm with her first-born's slumber in that nest.  
The poet sings upon the earth grave-riven,  
Before the naughty world, soon self-forgiven  
For wronging him,—and in the darkness prest  
From his own soul by worldly weights. Even so,  
Sing, seraph with the glory ! heaven is high ;  
Sing, poet with the sorrow ! earth is low :  
The universe's inward voices cry  
'Amen' to either song of joy and woe :  
Sing, seraph,—poet,—sing on equally !

## BEREAVEMENT.



WHEN some Beloveds, 'neath whose eyelids lay  
The sweet lights of my childhood, one by one  
Did leave me dark before the natural sun,  
And I astonied fell and could not pray,—  
A thought within me to myself did say,  
'Is God less God, that *thou* art left undone?  
Rise, worship, bless Him, in this sackcloth spun,  
As in that purple!'—But I answered, Nay!  
What child his filial heart in words can loose  
If he behold his tender father raise  
The hand that chastens sorely? can he choose  
But sob in silence with an upward gaze?—  
And *my* great Father, thinking fit to bruise,  
Discerns in speechless tears both prayer and praise.

## CONSOLATION.



ALL are not taken ; there are left behind  
Living Beloveds, tender looks to bring  
And make the daylight still a happy thing,  
And tender voices, to make soft the wind :  
But if it were not so—if I could find  
No love in all the world for comforting,  
Nor any path but hollowly did ring  
Where ‘dust to dust’ the love from life disjoined,  
And if, before those sepulchres unmoving  
I stood alone, (as some forsaken lamb  
Goes bleating up the moors in weary dearth)  
Crying ‘Where are ye, O my loved and loving?’—  
I know a Voice would sound, ‘Daughter, I AM.  
Can I suffice for HEAVEN and not for earth?’



## TO MARY RUSSELL MITFORD.

IN HER GARDEN.

WHAT time I lay these rhymes anear thy feet,  
Benignant friend, I will not proudly say  
As better poets use, 'These *flowers* I lay,'  
Because I would not wrong thy roses sweet,  
Blaspheming so their name. And yet, repeat  
Thou, overleaning them this springtime day,  
With heart as open to love as theirs to May,  
—'Low-rooted verse may reach some heavenly heat,  
Even like my blossoms, if as nature-true  
Though not as precious.' Thou art unperplexed,  
Dear friend, in whose dear writings drops the dew  
And blow the natural airs,—thou, who art next  
To nature's self in cheering the world's view,—  
To preach a sermon on so known a text!

ON A PORTRAIT OF WORDSWORTH BY  
B. R. HAYDON.

---

WORDSWORTH upon Helvellyn! Let the cloud  
Ebb audibly along the mountain-wind  
Then break against the rock, and show behind  
The lowland valleys floating up to crowd  
The sense with beauty. He with forehead bowed  
And humble-lidded eyes, as one inclined  
Before the sovran thought of his own mind,  
And very meek with inspirations proud,  
Takes here his rightful place as poet-priest  
By the high altar, singing prayer and prayer  
To the higher Heavens. A noble vision free  
Our Haydon's hand has flung out from the mist:  
No portrait this, with Academic air!  
This is the poet and his poetry.

## PAST AND FUTURE.



My future will not copy fair my past  
On any leaf but Heaven's. Be fully done,  
Supernal Will! I would not fain be one  
Who, satisfying thirst and breaking fast,  
Upon the fulness of the heart at last  
Says no grace after meat. My wine has run  
Indeed out of my cup, and there is none  
To gather up the bread of my repast  
Scattered and trampled; yet I find some good  
In earth's green herbs, and streams that bubble up  
Clear from the darkling ground,—content until  
I sit with angels before better food:  
Dear Christ! when Thy new vintage fills my cup,  
This hand shall shake no more, nor that wine spill.

## IRREPARABLENESS.



I HAVE been in the meadows all the day  
And gathered there the nosegay that you see,  
Singing within myself as bird or bee  
When such do field-work on a morn of May.  
But, now I look upon my flowers, decay  
Has met them in my hands more fatally  
Because more warmly clasped,—and sobs are free  
To come instead of songs. What do you say,  
Sweet counsellors, dear friends? that I should go  
Back straightway to the fields and gather more?  
Another, sooth, may do it, but not I!  
My heart is very tired, my strength is low,  
My hands are full of blossoms plucked before,  
Held dead within them till myself shall die.

## TEARS.



THANK God, bless God, all ye who suffer not  
More grief than ye can weep for. That is well—  
That is light grieving! lighter, none befell  
Since Adam forfeited the primal lot.  
Tears! what are tears? The babe weeps in its cot,  
The mother singing; at her marriage-bell  
The bride weeps, and before the oracle  
Of high-faned hills the poet has forgot  
Such moisture on his cheeks. Thank God for grace,  
Ye who weep only! If, as some have done,  
Ye grope tear-blinded in a desert place  
And touch but tombs,—look up! those tears will run  
Soon in long rivers down the lifted face,  
And leave the vision clear for stars and sun.

## GRIEF.



I TELL you, hopeless grief is passionless;  
That only men incredulous of despair,  
Half-taught in anguish, through the midnight air  
Beat upward to God's throne in loud access  
Of shrieking and reproach. Full desertness  
In souls as countries, lieth silent-bare  
Under the blanching, vertical eye-glare  
Of the absolute Heavens. Deep-hearted man, express  
Grief for thy Dead in silence like to death—  
Most like a monumental statue set  
In everlasting watch and moveless woe  
Till itself crumble to the dust beneath.  
Touch it; the marble eyelids are not wet:  
If it could weep, it could arise and go.

## SUBSTITUTION.



WHEN some belov'd voice that was to you  
Both sound and sweetness, faileth suddenly,  
And silence against which you dare not cry,  
Aches round you like a strong disease and new—  
What hope ? what help ? what music will undo  
That silence to your sense ? Not friendship's sigh,  
Not reason's subtle count ; not melody  
Of viols, nor of pipes that Faunus blew ;  
Not songs of poets, nor of nightingales  
Whose hearts leap upward through the cypress-trees  
To the clear moon ; nor yet the spheric laws  
Self-chanted, nor the angels' sweet All hails,  
Met in the smile of God : nay, none of these.  
Speak *τινός*, availing Christ !—and fill this pause.

## COMFORT.



SPEAK low to me, my Saviour, low and sweet  
From out the hallelujahs, sweet and low,  
Lest I should fear and fall, and miss Thee so  
Who art not missed by any that entreat.  
Speak to me as to Mary at Thy feet!  
And if no precious gums my hands bestow,  
Let my tears drop like amber while I go  
In reach of Thy divinest voice complete  
In humanest affection—thus, in sooth,  
To lose the sense of losing. As a child,  
Whose song-bird seeks the wood for evermore,  
Is sung to in its stead by mother's mouth  
Till, sinking on her breast, love-reconciled,  
He sleeps the faster that he wept before.



## PERPLEXED MUSIC.

AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED TO E. J.

EXPERIENCE, like a pale musician, holds  
A dulcimer of patience in his hand,  
Whence harmonies we cannot understand,  
Of God's will in His worlds, the strain unfolds  
In sad, perplex'd minors : deathly colds  
Fall on us while we hear, and countermand  
Our sanguine heart back from the fancy-land  
With nightingales in visionary wolds.  
We murmur, ' Where is any certain tune  
Or measured music in such notes as these ?'  
But angels, leaning from the golden seat,  
Are not so minded ; their fine ear hath won  
The issue of completed cadences,  
And, smiling down the stars, they whisper—SWEET.

## WORK.



WHAT are we set on earth for? Say, to toil;  
Nor seek to leave thy tending of the vines  
For all the heat o' the day, till it declines,  
And Death's mild curfew shall from work assoil.  
God did anoint thee with His odorous oil,  
To wrestle, not to reign; and He assigns  
All thy tears over, like pure crystallines,  
For younger fellow-workers of the soil  
To wear for amulets. So others shall  
Take patience, labour, to their heart and hand,  
From thy hand and thy heart and thy brave cheer,  
And God's grace fructify through thee to all.  
The least flower, with a brimming cup may stand,  
And share its dew-drop with another near.

## FUTURITY.



AND, O belov'd voices, upon which  
Ours passionately call because erelong  
Ye brake off in the middle of that song  
We sang together softly, to enrich  
The poor world with the sense of love, and witch  
The heart out of things evil,—I am strong,  
Knowing ye are not lost for aye among  
The hills, with last year's thrush. God keeps a niche  
In Heaven to hold our idols : and albeit  
He brake them to our faces and denied  
That our close kisses should impair their white,  
I know we shall behold them raised, complete,  
The dust swept from their beauty,—glorified  
New Memnons singing in the great God-light.

## THE TWO SAYINGS.

---

Two sayings of the Holy Scriptures beat  
Like pulses in the church's brow and breast ;  
And by them we find rest in our unrest  
And, heart-deep in salt tears, do yet entreat,  
God's fellowship as if on heavenly seat.  
The first is JESUS WEPT,—whereon is prest  
Full many a sobbing face that drops its best  
And sweetest waters on the record sweet :  
And one is where the Christ, denied and scorned,  
LOOKED UPON PETER. Oh, to render plain,  
By help of having loved a little and mourned,  
That look of sovran love and sovran pain  
Which HE, who could not sin yet suffered, turned  
On him who could reject but not sustain !

## THE LOOK.



THE Saviour looked on Peter. Ay, no word,  
No gesture of reproach ; the Heavens serene  
Though heavy with armed justice, did not lean  
Their thunders that way : the forsaken Lord  
*Looked* only, on the traitor. None record  
What that look was, none guess ; for those who have  
seen

Wronged lovers loving through a death-pang keen,  
Or pale-cheeked martyrs smiling to a sword,  
Have missed Jehovah at the judgment-call.  
And Peter, from the height of blasphemy—  
' I never knew this man '—did quail and fall  
As knowing straight THAT GOD ; and turnèd free  
And went out speechless from the face of all,  
And filled the silence, weeping bitterly.

## THE MEANING OF THE LOOK.



I THINK that look of Christ might seem to say—  
‘Thou Peter! art thou then a common stone  
Which I at last must break my heart upon,  
For all God’s charge to His high angels may  
Guard my foot better? Did I yesterday  
Wash *thy* feet, my beloved, that they should run  
Quick to deny me ’neath the morning sun?  
And do thy kisses, like the rest, betray?  
The cock crows coldly.—Go, and manifest  
A late contrition, but no bootless fear!  
For when thy final need is dreariest,  
Thou shalt not be denied, as I am here;  
My voice to God and angels shall attest,  
*Because I KNOW this man, let him be clear.*’

## A THOUGHT FOR A LONELY DEATH-BED.

INSCRIBED TO MY FRIEND E. C.

IF God compel thee to this destiny,  
To die alone, with none beside thy bed  
To ruffle round with sobs thy last word said  
And mark with tears the pulses ebb from thee,—  
Pray then alone, ‘O Christ, come tenderly!  
By Thy forsaken Sonship in the red  
Drear wine-press,—by the wilderness outspread,—  
And the lone garden where Thine agony  
Fell bloody from Thy brow,—by all of those  
Permitted desolations, comfort mine!  
No earthly friend being near me, interpose  
No deathly angel ’twixt my face and Thine,  
But stoop Thyself to gather my life’s rose,  
And smile away my mortal to Divine!’

## WORK AND CONTEMPLATION.

THE woman singeth at her spinning-wheel  
A pleasant chant, ballad or barcarole ;  
She thinketh of her song, upon the whole,  
Far more than of her flax ; and yet the reel  
Is full, and artfully her fingers feel  
With quick adjustment, provident control,  
The lines, too subtly twisted to unroll,  
Out to a perfect thread. I hence appeal  
To the dear Christian church—that we may do  
Our Father's business in these temples mirk,  
Thus swift and steadfast, thus intent and strong ;  
While thus, apart from toil, our souls pursue  
Some high, calm, spheric tune, and prove our work  
The better for the sweetness of our song.



## PAIN IN PLEASURE.



A THOUGHT lay like a flower upon mine heart,  
And drew around it other thoughts like bees  
For multitude and thirst of sweetnesses ;  
Whereat rejoicing, I desired the art  
Of the Greek whistler, who to wharf and mart  
Could lure those insect swarms from orange-trees,  
That I might hive with me such thoughts and please  
My soul so, always. Foolish counterpart  
Of a weak man's vain wishes ! While I spoke,  
The thought I called a flower grew nettle-rough,  
The thoughts, called bees, stung me to festering :  
Oh, entertain (cried Reason as she woke,)  
Your best and gladdest thoughts but long enough,  
And they will all prove sad enough to sting!

## FLUSH OR FAUNUS.



You see this dog ; it was but yesterday  
I mused forgetful of his presence here  
Till thought on thought drew downward tear on tear :  
When from the pillow where wet-cheeked I lay,  
A head as hairy as Faunus thrust its way  
Right sudden against my face, two golden-clear  
Great eyes astonished mine, a drooping ear  
Did flap me on either cheek to dry the spray !  
I started first as some Arcadian  
Amazed by goatly god in twilight grove  
But as the bearded vision closelier ran  
My tears off, I knew Flush, and rose above  
Surprise and sadness,—thanking the true PAN  
Who by low creatures leads to heights of love.

## FINITE AND INFINITE.



THE wind sounds only in opposing straits,  
The sea, beside the shore ; man's spirit rends  
Its quiet only up against the ends  
Of wants and oppositions, loves and hates,  
Where, worked and worn by passionate debates,  
And losing by the loss it apprehends,  
The flesh rocks round and every breath it sends  
Is ravelled to a sigh. All tortured states  
Suppose a straitened place. Jehovah Lord,  
Make room for rest, around me ! out of sight  
Now float me, of the vexing land abhorred,  
Till in deep calms of space my soul may right  
Her nature, shoot large sail on lengthening cord,  
And rush exultant on the Infinite.

## AN APPREHENSION.



IF all the gentlest-hearted friends I know  
Concentred in one heart their gentleness,  
That still grew gentler till its pulse was less  
For life than pity,—I should yet be slow  
To bring my own heart nakedly below  
The palm of such a friend, that he should press  
Motive, condition, means, appliances,  
My false ideal joy and fickle woe,  
Out full to light and knowledge ; I should fear  
Some plait between the brows, some rougher chime  
In the free voice. O angels, let your flood  
Of bitter scorn dash on me ! do ye hear  
What *I* say who bear calmly all the time  
This everlasting face to face with God ?

## DISCONTENT.



LIGHT human nature is too lightly tost  
And ruffled without cause, complaining on,  
Restless with rest, until, being overthrown,  
It learneth to lie quiet. Let a frost  
Or a small wasp have crept to the innermost  
Of our ripe peach, or let the wilful sun  
Shine westward of our window,—straight we run  
A furlong's sigh as if the world were lost.  
But what time through the heart and through the brain  
God hath transfixed us,—we, so moved before,  
Attain to a calm. Ay, shouldering weights of pain,  
We anchor in deep waters, safe from shore,  
And hear submissive o'er the stormy main  
God's chartered judgments walk for evermore.

## PATIENCE TAUGHT BY NATURE.



‘ O DREARY life,’ we cry, ‘ O dreary life!’  
And still the generations of the birds  
Sing through our sighing, and the flocks and herds  
Serenely live while we are keeping strife  
With Heaven’s true purpose in us, as a knife  
Against which we may struggle ! Ocean girds  
Unslackened the dry land, savannah-swards  
Unweary sweep, hills watch unworn, and rife  
Meek leaves drop yearly from the forest-trees  
To show, above, the unwasted stars that pass  
In their old glory : O thou God of old,  
Grant me some smaller grace than comes to these !—  
But so much patience as a blade of grass  
Grows by, contented through the heat and cold.

## CHEERFULNESS TAUGHT BY REASON.



I THINK we are too ready with complaint  
In this fair world of God's. Had we no hope  
Indeed beyond the zenith and the slope  
Of yon grey blank of sky, we might grow faint  
To muse upon eternity's constraint  
Round our aspirant souls; but since the scope  
Must widen early, is it well to droop,  
For a few days consumed in loss and taint?  
O pusillanimous Heart, be comforted  
And, like a cheerful traveller, take the road,  
Singing beside the hedge. What if the bread  
Be bitter in thine inn, and thou unshod  
To meet the flints? At least it may be said,  
'Because the way is *short*, I thank thee, God.'

## EXAGGERATION.



WE overstate the ills of life, and take  
Imagination (given us to bring down  
The choirs of singing angels overshadowed  
By God's clear glory) down our earth to rake  
The dismal snows instead, flake following flake,  
To cover all the corn ; we walk upon  
The shadow of hills across a level thrown,  
And pant like climbers : near the alderbrake  
We sigh so loud, the nightingale within  
Refuses to sing loud, as else she would.  
O brothers, let us leave the shame and sin  
Of taking vainly, in a plaintive mood,  
The holy name of GRIEF !—holy herein,  
That by the grief of ONE came all our good.



## ADEQUACY.



Now, by the verdure on thy thousand hills,  
Belov'd England, doth the earth appear  
Quite good enough for men to overbear  
The will of God in, with rebellious wills !  
We cannot say the morning-sun fulfils  
Ingloriously its course, nor that the clear  
Strong stars without significance insphere  
Our habitation : we, meantime, our ills  
Heap up against this good and lift a cry  
Against this work-day world, this ill-spread feast,  
As if ourselves were better certainly  
Than what we come to. Maker and High Priest,  
I ask thee not my joys to multiply,—  
Only to make me worthier of the least.

## TO GEORGE SAND.

## A DESIRE.

THOU large-brained woman and large-hearted man,  
Self-called George Sand! whose soul, amid the lions  
Of thy tumultuous senses, moans defiance  
And answers roar for roar, as spirits can :  
I would some mild miraculous thunder ran  
Above the applauded circus, in appliance  
Of thine own nobler nature's strength and science,  
Drawing two pinions, white as wings of swan,  
From thy strong shoulders, to amaze the place  
With holier light! that thou to woman's claim  
And man's, might'st join beside the angel's grace  
Of a pure genius sanctified from blame,  
Till child and maiden pressed to thine embrace  
To kiss upon thy lips a stainless fame.

## TO GEORGE SAND.

## A RECOGNITION.

TRUE genius, but true woman ! dost deny  
The woman's nature with a manly scorn,  
And break away the gauds and armlets worn  
By weaker women in captivity ?  
Ah, vain denial ! that revolted cry  
Is sobbed in by a woman's voice forlorn,—  
'Thy woman's hair, my sister, all unshorn  
Floats back dishevelled strength in agony,  
Disproving thy man's name : and while before  
The world thou burnest in a poet-fire,  
We see thy woman-heart beat evermore  
Through the large flame. Beat purer, heart, and higher  
Till God unsex thee on the heavenly shore  
Where unincarnate spirits purely aspire !

## THE PRISONER.



I COUNT the dismal time by months and years  
Since last I felt the green sward under foot,  
And the great breath of all things summer-mute  
Met mine upon my lips. Now earth appears  
As strange to me as dreams of distant spheres  
Or thoughts of Heaven we weep at. Nature's lute  
Sounds on, behind this door so closely shut,  
A strange wild music to the prisoner's ears,  
Dilated by the distance, till the brain  
Grows dim with fancies which it feels too fine,  
While ever, with a visionary pain,  
Past the precluded senses, sweep and shine  
Streams, forests, glades, and many a golden train  
Of sunlit hills transfigured to Divine.

## INSUFFICIENCY.



WHEN I attain to utter forth in verse  
Some inward thought, my soul throbs audibly  
Along my pulses, yearning to be free  
And something farther, fuller, higher, rehearse,  
To the individual, true, and the universe,  
In consummation of right harmony :  
But, like a wind-exposed distorted tree,  
We are blown against for ever by the curse  
Which breathes through nature. Oh, the world is weak,  
The effluence of each is false to all,  
And what we best conceive we fail to speak.  
Wait, soul, until thine ashen garments fall,  
And then resume thy broken strains, and seek  
Fit peroration without let or thrall.

## TWO SKETCHES.

H. B.

I.

THE shadow of her face upon the wall  
May take your memory to the perfect Greek,  
But when you front her, you would call the cheek  
Too full, sir, for your models, if withal  
That bloom it wears could leave you critical,  
And that smile reaching toward the rosy streak;  
For one who smiles so, has no need to speak  
To lead your thoughts along, as steed to stall.  
A smile that turns the sunny side o' the heart  
On all the world, as if herself did win  
By what she lavished on an open mart!  
Let no man call the liberal sweetness, sin,—  
For friends may whisper as they stand apart,  
'Methinks there's still some warmer place within.'

## A. B.

## II.

HER azure eyes, dark lashes hold in fee ;  
Her fair superfluous ringlets without check  
Drop after one another down her neck,  
As many to each cheek as you might see  
Green leaves to a wild rose ; this sign outwardly,  
And a like woman-covering seems to deck  
Her inner nature, for she will not fleck  
World's sunshine with a finger. Sympathy  
Must call her in Love's name ! and then, I know,  
She rises up, and brightens as she should,  
And lights her smile for comfort, and is slow  
In nothing of high-hearted fortitude.  
To smell this flower, come near it ! such can grow  
In that sole garden where Christ's brow dropped blood.

## MOUNTAINEER AND POET.

---

THE simple goatherd between Alp and sky,  
Seeing his shadow, in that awful tryst,  
Dilated to a giant's on the mist,  
Esteems not his own stature larger by  
The apparent image, but more patiently  
Strikes his staff down beneath his clenching fist,  
While the snow-mountains lift their amethyst  
And sapphire crowns of splendour, far and nigh,  
Into the air around him. Learn from hence  
Meek morals, all ye poets that pursue  
Your way still onward up to eminence  
Ye are not great because creation drew  
Large revelations round your earliest sense,  
Nor bright because God's glory shines for you.



## THE POET.



THE poet hath the child's sight in his breast  
And sees all *new*. What oftenest he has viewed,  
He views with the first glory. Fair and good  
Pall never on him, at the fairest, best,  
But stand before him holy and undressed  
In week-day false conventions, such as would  
Drag other men down from the altitude  
Of primal types, too early dispossessed.  
Why, God would tire of all his heavens, as soon  
As thou, O godlike, childlike poet, didst  
Of daily and nightly sights of sun and moon !  
And therefore hath He set thee in the midst  
Where men may hear thy wonder's ceaseless tune,  
And praise His world for ever, as thou bidst.

## HIRAM POWERS' GREEK SLAVE.

THEY say Ideal beauty cannot enter  
The house of anguish. On the threshold stands  
An alien Image with enshackled hands,  
Called the Greek Slave! as if the artist meant her  
(That passionless perfection which he lent her,  
Shadowed not darkened where the sill expands)  
To so confront man's crimes in different lands  
With man's ideal sense. Pierce to the centre,  
Art's fiery finger! and break up ere long  
The serfdom of this world! appeal, fair stone,  
From God's pure heights of beauty against man's wrong!  
Catch up in thy divine face, not alone  
East griefs but west, and strike and shame the strong,  
By thunders of white silence, overthrown.

## LIFE.



EACH creature holds an insular point in space;  
Yet what man stirs a finger, breathes a sound,  
But all the multitudinous beings round  
In all the countless worlds with time and place  
For their conditions, down to the central base,  
Thrill, haply, in vibration and rebound,  
Life answering life across the vast profound,  
In full antiphony, by a common grace?  
I think this sudden joyaunce which illumes  
A child's mouth sleeping, unaware may run  
From some soul newly loosened from earth's tombs:  
I think this passionate sigh, which half-begun  
I stifle back, may reach and stir the plumes  
Of God's calm angel standing in the sun.

## LOVE.



WE cannot live, except thus mutually  
We alternate, aware or unaware,  
The reflex act of life ; and when we bear  
Our virtue outward most impulsively,  
Most full of invocation, and to be  
Most instantly compellant, certes there  
We live most life, whoever breathes most air  
And counts his dying years by sun and sea :  
But when a soul, by choice and conscience, doth  
Throw out her full force on another soul,  
The conscience and the concentration both  
Make mere life, Love. For Life in perfect whole  
And aim consummated, is Love in sooth,  
As nature's magnet-heat rounds pole with pole.

## HEAVEN AND EARTH.

"And there was silence in heaven for the space of half an hour."

*Revelation.*

God, who with thunders and great voices kept  
Beneath Thy throne, and stars most silver-paced  
Along the inferior gyres, and open-faced  
Melodious angels round,—canst intercept  
Music with music,—yet, at will, hast swept  
All back, all back, (said he in Patmos placed)  
To fill the heavens with silence of the waste  
Which lasted half an hour!—lo, I who have wept  
All day and night, beseech Thee by my tears,  
And by that dread response of curse and groan  
Men alternate across these hemispheres,  
Vouchsafe us such a half-hour's hush alone,  
In compensation for our stormy years:  
As heaven has paused from song, let earth from moan!

## THE PROSPECT.

---

METHINKS we do as fretful children do,  
Leaning their faces on the window-pane  
To sigh the glass dim with their own breath's stain,  
And shut the sky and landscape from their view :  
And thus, alas, since God the maker drew  
A mystic separation 'twixt those twain,  
The life beyond us, and our souls in pain,  
We miss the prospect which we are called unto  
By grief we are fools to use. Be still and strong,  
O man, my brother ! hold thy sobbing breath,  
And keep thy soul's large window pure from wrong ;  
That so, as life's appointment issueth,  
Thy vision may be clear to watch along  
The sunset consummation-lights of death.

## HUGH STUART BOYD.\*

## HIS BLINDNESS.

God would not let the spheric lights accost  
This God-loved man, and bade the earth stand off  
With all her beckoning hills whose golden stuff  
Under the feet of the royal sun is crossed.  
Yet such things were to him not wholly lost,—  
Permitted, with his wandering eyes light-proof,  
To catch fair visions rendered full enough  
By many a ministrant accomplished ghost,—  
Still seeing, to sounds of softly-turned book-leaves,  
Sappho's crown-rose, and Meleager's spring,  
And Gregory's starlight on Greek-burnished eyes:  
Till Sensuous and Unsensuous seemed one thing,  
Viewed from one level,—earth's reapers at the sheaves  
Scarce plainer than Heaven's angels on the wing.

\* To whom was inscribed, in grateful affection, my poem of "Cyprus Wine." There comes a moment in life when even gratitude and affection turn to pain, as they do now with me. This excellent and learned man, enthusiastic for the good and the beautiful, and one of the most simple and upright of human beings, passed out of his long darkness through death in the summer of 1848; Dr. Adam Clarke's daughter and biographer, Mrs. Smith, (happier in this than the absent) fulfilling a doubly filial duty as she sat by the death-bed of her father's friend and hers.

## HUGH STUART BOYD.

HIS DEATH, 1848.

BELOVĒD friend, who living many years  
With sightless eyes raised vainly to the sun,  
Didst learn to keep thy patient soul in tune  
To visible nature's elemental cheers !  
God has not caught thee to new hemispheres  
Because thou wast aweary of this one ;—  
I think thine angel's patience first was done,  
And that he spake out with celestial tears,  
'Is it enough, dear God ? then lighten so  
This soul that smiles in darkness !'

Steadfast friend,  
Who never didst my heart or life misknow,  
Nor either's faults too keenly apprehend,—  
How can I wonder when I see thee go  
To join the Dead found faithful to the end ?



## HUGH STUART BOYD.

## LEGACIES.

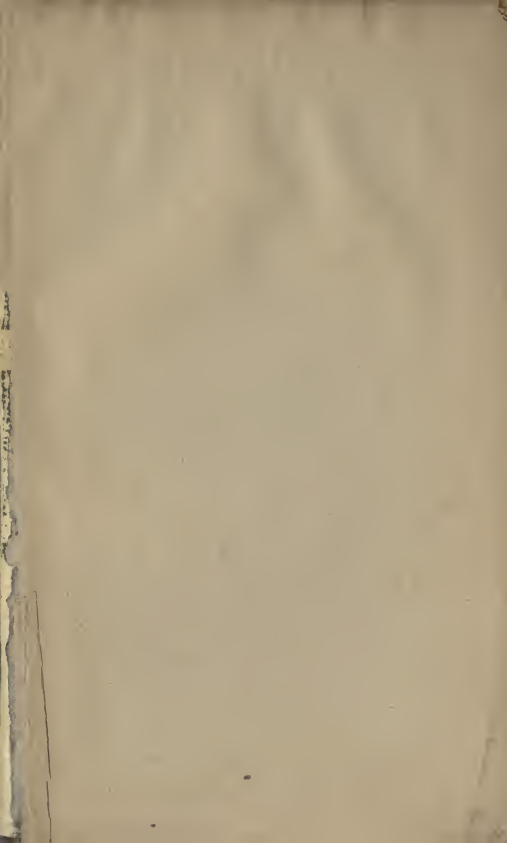
THREE gifts the Dying left me,—Æschylus,  
And Gregory Nazianzen, and a clock  
Chiming the gradual hours out like a flock  
Of stars whose motion is melodious.  
The books were those I used to read from, thus  
Assisting my dear teacher's soul to unlock  
The darkness of his eyes ; now, mine they mock,  
Blinded in turn by tears ; now, murmurous  
Sad echoes of my young voice, years ago  
Entoning from these leaves the Grecian phrase,  
Return and choke my utterance. Books, lie down  
In silence on the shelf there, within gaze ;  
And thou, clock, striking the hour's pulses on,  
Chime in the day which ends these parting-days !

END OF VOL. II.

LONDON : PRINTED BY  
SPOTTISWOODE AND CO., NEW-STREET SQUARE  
AND PARLIAMENT STREET



Mar. Brown  
Heard 70 4<sup>th</sup> St



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